MOSCOW IN FLAMES

G. P. DANILEVSKI

ERINDALE COLLEGE
3 1761 02413762 2

MOSCOW IN FLAMES

MOSCOW IN FLAMES

BY

G. P. DANILEVSKI

Translated from the Russian by Dr. A. S. RAPPOPORT

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1917

ERINDALE
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Printed in Great Britain at The Devonshire Press, Torquay

PREFACE

GREGORY PETROVITSH DANILEVSKI, the author of "Moscow in Flames," now published for the first time in English (it is also the first book from his pen rendered accessible to the British reading public), was born on April 14th, 1829, at Danilovka, in the province of Kharkoff. He was descended from an ancient Cossack family, and his work frequently reflects the roaming, vagabond spirit of his ancestors. He passed his early childhood in the peace and quiet of his little native village which he greatly loved, and which later he often described in the stories he published during the first half of his literary career.

His childish imagination was fed with the old tales of heroic deeds and the old legends of his Ukrainian home; all of which later became for him a storehouse of material for his Ukrainian stories. He went to school at Moscow and then entered the University of Petrograd where he studied criminal law. In 1849 he accidentally became involved in the Petrashevski affair, was arrested and kept a prisoner for some months in the Petropavlovsk fortress: the Russian Bastille. However, he succeeded in passing his final examinations, took his degree in 1850, and entered the Ministry of Public Instruction.

From 1868 he wrote for the *Pravitelstveny Vyestnik* or "Government Messenger," which paper he edited from 1881 to his death in 1890. Danilevski's larger works first appeared in the *Vyestnik Europi* ("European Messenger") the *Rousskaya Mysl* ("Russian Thought") and in the bibliographical section of the official organ *The Government Messenger*. He started his literary activities by writing some small poems and making several translations from Shakespeare and Byron. But his stories of the Ukraine or of Little Russia, in which he employed his childhood's impressions, were more successful.

Danilevski first attracted public attention with his Triology describing the life and adventures of Russian fugitives in the steppes. His "Fugitives in New Russia," published in 1862, under the pseudonym of "A. Skavronski"; "The Return of the Fugitives," and "Freedom" are full of the romance of struggle and labour. These three novels are ethnographical in character and describe the life and experiences of the Russian peasants when, in terror of serfdom, they fled to the Southern Russian steppes and met with greater sufferings and adventures. His work is very similar to that of Fenimore Cooper and the latter's descriptions of life in Texas and Kansas, therefore, he has often been called the Russian Cooper.

The year 1878 was a notable one for Danilevski; it marked a turning point in his literary career, for then he put ethnographical work aside to try his hand at historical novel writing. To these latter belong his "Potemkin on the Danube,"

(1878); "Mirovitsh," (1879); "Princess Tarakanoff," (1883); "Moscow in Flames" (1886), etc. In spite of the fact that Danilevski's delineation of character is somewhat weak, he is nevertheless a splendid and vivid story-teller, and he still enjoys great popularity in Russia. The secret of his popularity lies in his choice of subject; it is always interesting and fascinating. From an artistic point of view, his historical novels are inferior to his earlier ethnographical works, but, on the other hand, they are maturer and are not written so hastily or with such an evident desire for melodramatic effect.

Danilevski has always been a great student of the eighteenth century; his historical knowledge is profound and authoritative, as is evidenced by the accuracy and minuteness of detail given in "Mirovitsh" and "Moscow in Flames." In "Moscow in Flames" Danilevski competes with Tolstoy's "War and Peace," and I venture to point out that he was so successful in his effort that his heroine, Aurora Kramalin, the great society beauty, who, deserting her sex, fought in the ranks against the invaders, would have been considered an abomination by Tolstoy. This novel has also a somewhat topical interest for it will enable the reader to draw comparisons between the Napoleonic invasion of Russia and the present European cataclysm. Napoleon's frustrated campaign against Russia finally resulted in the Corsican's abdication. Tsar Alexander, against whom the victor of Austerlitz and Jena led his "grande armée," was ultimately received by the enthus-

iastic Parisians as their saviour, and they flung down their idol from his pedestal. *Sapienti sat. Caveat Guilelmus secundus!* Will not the present European war end in the abdication of him who craved to be a second Napoleon? We hope so in the interests of humanity and civilisation.

A. S. RAPPOPORT.

MOSCOW IN FLAMES

I

NEVER had the people of Moscow and its neighbourhood enjoyed themselves so much as during the first months of the terrible and gloomy year "twelve." In the suburbs, as in the city, balls were succeeded by balls only varied by promenades, concerts and mascarades. Winged Cupid seemed to be hovering over Moscow, that haven and refuge of the shipwrecked, such as the Orloffs, the Suboffs, etc. Numerous were the gallant adventures, the elopements from beneath the paternal roof and the duels in a society that was distinguished by many brilliant and remarkable beauties, the inspiration of the poets of the day. The Moscovites met to enjoy their society at the houses of the Razumovski's, the Neledinski-Meletzkis, the Arkharoffs, Apraxins and Buturlins.

May was approaching its end. In spite of the appearance of the comet and the incessant and disquieting rumours of a probable break-up of relations with Napoleon, no one believed in the possibility of war, and no one paid any heed.

In one of the wealthy houses in the quarter of the Patriarchal Ponds, the house of a rich sexa-

genarian widow of a brigadier-general, Princess Sheleshpansky, a crowded reception of city and country guests was held one evening. It was the birthday of the first great-grandson of the Princess. The year before, on an equally beautiful April day, the marriage of her eldest grand-daughter, the joyful and vivacious Xenia Valerianovna Kramalin, had been celebrated at Lyubanova, one of the Princess' estates. She had married Ilya Borisovitsh Tropinin, the secretary of the Senate of Moscow and a functionary of the Theatre-Administration.

Besides celebrating the christening of her great-grandson with such splendour, the Princess had another reason for wishing that joy should surround her. Her second grand-daughter, the proud and serious-minded Aurora Kramalin, was on the point of following the dictates of her young heart and betrothing herself to Basil Alexeievitsh Perovski, a general staff officer, who was on leave at Moscow. The old Princess was pleased that he should pay such assiduous court to Aurora. Perovski had been introduced to Aurora at the last winter ball by her sister's husband, Ilya Tropinin, the young officer's friend and schoolfellow.

The majority of the Princess' guests were already leaving; old Mordvinoff, Prince Dolgoruki, Prince Calembour as he was called, Neledinski-Meletzki, Sergius Glinka, and the Editor of the *Rousski Vjestnik* had gone. Only a few relations and intimates remained, among whom was an old friend of her late husband, Count Rostoptshin, who had just been appointed commandant-in-

chief of Moscow. He was a man of tall stature and carried his fifty years very lightly; he had dark, very brilliant eyes, a broad, open forehead and narrow side whiskers framing his face. He talked loudly, even shouted when he became animated. The Princess confided in him, though she did not mention it to any of her other guests, that Aurora's admirer was the natural son of the Minister of Public Instruction, a grand seigneur of the Ukraine.

When taking his leave, Rostoptshin, with a smile, designated Basil Perovski, who, clad in a new uniform, was sitting in a corner, and half whispered to her: "Your grand-daughter is wrong to delay; the admirer is acceptable and you ought to settle the matter before he returns to his duties."

"But why hurry, Count? Aurora is not yet eighteen," replied the Princess. "In any case, she will not be an old maid. Everything is in God's hands. Besides, carnival is approaching, and the young man's leave is now up. He promises to return after the Day of Assumption, by the end of August, and then, if we are alive, we shall celebrate the betrothal and wedding at once."

"You will invite me, Princess. But take my advice, do not protract this love-affair; you know that people are talking of the possibility of war."

"But, my dear Count, where is this Napoleon?" said the Princess. "There are many leagues between him and us. And then, are we not under the guardianship of the holy protectors of Moscow?

And do we not also rely upon your ability, Monsieur le Comte ? "

Rostoptshin looked at the other guests in a worried manner, drew on his gloves and moved to go, then, suddenly, drawing his brows decisively together, he took a seat near the Princess.

" Do you know anything new ? " asked Anna Arcadievna.

Rostoptshin nodded. The Princess nearly fainted. " Speak, my dear, speak," she said, in great distress, as she searched in her reticule for her smelling salts and then inhaled their perfume. " This is neither the place nor the moment," said the Count; " I shall come to see you to-morrow."

" No, no, tell me this evening, do not make me anxious. You know what a coward I am."

" But to-night you have guests, and no doubt they will play boston, and you know how I detest all card games."

" Do not talk against the cards. Remember that Talleyrand said : ' He who never plays cards in his youth prepares a sad old age for himself.' Well, till this evening, I shall be alone for you."

" I shall do my best to come."

II

THE Count kept his word. The Princess received him in her oratory. This room, as the Count knew, served her also as a bed-chamber and refuge during the summer thunderstorms. The Count curiously examined the decoration of the room ; everything was made of silk : the hangings of the walls and windows, the quilts, pillows and sheets, while the bed was made of glass and stood upon large glass feet ; even a portrait of Napoleon was in silk woven at Lyons and brought from Paris. Rostoptshin found the Princess lying upon her bed. Two chambermaids were standing in front of her holding up her dog Tutik, while another chambermaid was busy endeavouring to slip a new embroidered costume on the little beast. Taking Tutik into her arms, the Princess dismissed her maids and begged the Count to sit down.

Tall, with powdered hair, and a face as if cut in ivory, Anna Arcadievna was the last representative of an ancient family, whose women, from generation to generation. had always been distinguished for their daring spirit and rare beauty. At balls, mothers used to say to their young daughters ; " You see that lady so pale and thin. She has come from Paris. When you pass before her, do not forget to bow low and to kiss her hand, you will not regret it."

In his youth, Rostoptshin had seen the charm and seductive powers of these great ladies of the 18th century, and among them the Princess, whom all men courted. The absolute submission to these queens of fashion had not surprised him then, but now he laughed quietly to himself, both at them and at the Princess. He would often tease the latter, who had brought with her, as mementoes of her long sojourn in Paris, the fashion of using hoar-frost powder, of dressing her hair à trois marteaux, and a predilection for giddily-coloured dresses. Speaking of the ardent, honest, though affected Princess, the Count had even once remarked that Danté had omitted one section in his Inferno : where many worldly sinners would suffer not remorse for their guilt, but regret at the remembrance of the opportunities they had let slip because of their cowardice or pride.

In the olden days, the Princess, a disciple of Voltaire, Diderot and Mme. Roland, had not been afraid of anything, but now, at the slightest clap of thunder, she would take refuge in her oratory, would light the candles before the holy images, dress herself from head to foot in silken garments, creep under the silken covers of her crystal bed, and finally losing all self-control in her fear, would scold and shout at her maids and the poor relations to whom she had given a home for charity's sake, and would order them to shut all the doors and shutter all the windows. Every rumble of thunder would set her trembling, and she would ceaselessly murmur " Holy, holy, holy, Hozanna in the places most high," until the thunder had passed, and the storm was over.

" The Princess clings to life," thought Rostoptshin, as he sat down in the easy chair," but why should she not ? Life is sweet to her, and she is so wealthy. But another storm is approaching, a storm from which neither her silken hangings, nor her glass bed will be able to protect her."

" Well, Count," the Princess, cuddling the dog in her lap, asked anxiously," is it true that we are going to have war ? " Like the rest of Moscow society of those days, she spoke in French, using the Russian language only when praying, or joking, or scolding her servants.

" We are alone, Anna Arcadievna," replied the Count, " and, as an old friend of your husband's and, I venture to say, an old admirer of yours, I confess that things do not look bright for us. Bonaparte has left St. Cloud and intends to come here. He is now in Dresden and surrounded, so the Hamburg courier says, by kings, dukes and a countless army."

" But he does not always make war ; it is only his pastime. Perhaps he does not intend to march against us at all."

" Alas, Tsar Alexander Pavlovitsh has left St. Petersburg in haste, and gone to Vilna ; all thoughts, all eyes are directed there."

" But Count, it may only be a threat against some of our neighbours. How can we believe it is against us ? "

" Bonaparte would never have gathered such an army against anyone but us. He has half a million men ready now, and over 1,200 cannon ; one train alone contains 6,000 carts."

The Princess inhaled her smelling salts, and shifted her sleeping dog.

"And you believe this, Count?" she asked with a sigh.

Fedor Vassilievitsh crossed his arms over his chest. "A fiery current is traversing Europe, and is now touching Russia. I have predicted it more than once. The usurper ought to have been stopped when, without declaring war, he seized entire countries and entered the capitals. It is now our turn,the turn of us Russians, to see him on the Western frontiers at least, if not nearer."

"But whose fault is it?"

Rostoptshin was silent.

"And our army, our legions of Cossacks, the pious troop, the unshaven troop!" continued the Princess.

"The bearded ones!" said Rostoptshin in Russian. "But my dear Princess, you should not speak like that, you, who have lived abroad so long. You have seen everything, heard every thing."

The Princess was flattered and forgot her fear for a moment. She thought of Paris, and of the celebrities who used to crowd her salon.

"Fancy, Count, that my good friend Mme. de Stael assures me that Bonaparte is coarse, rude, and an outrageous liar. Don't you think that is a little exaggerated? I am not as au courant as you; tell me what you think about it."

Rostoptshin bowed. "It is perfectly true," he said. "Napoleon considers Metternich a great statesman, only because he can lie so adroitly

For some time past, I have maintained—but no one would agree with me—that Bonaparte has a mean and envious soul without a touch of greatness. His education is that of a corporal only; real culture has never touched him. He pours out abuse like a market women, or a soldier. He has never read anything decent, and does not even care for reading."

"And yet Mme. de Rémusat, at whose house I saw him, is enraptured with him."

"She is the daughter of his minister. Believe me, he is another Tamerlane, great impulses of the heart and the ties of blood are unknown to him, and his constant desire to dissemble has poisoned the last vestige of truth in him. According to his own admissions, the ordinary laws of morality and the conventions accepted by everyone are not binding on him. Did he not lately say that *he* was the French revolution incarnate, that he carried it in himself, that the man who hid from him in the depth of a desert was wise, and that when he dies the universe will heave a sigh of relief?"

"But what is his grudge against us?" inquired the Princess in great agitation.

"He has been spoilt by fortune and besides, he has been refused the hand of the Grand-Duchess Catherine Pavlovna. But he is a genius according to the press and the young poet hangers-on; he is the fate of servile Europe. How could one thus treat a genius? And now he is telling the whole of Europe that 'Russia has forgotten herself; I shall throw her back into the heart of Asia; I shall mete out to her the fate of Poland!' And yet, in

my hearts of hearts, I feel convinced that we shall not perish."

"Really?" said the Princess, quite relieved, "but please tranquillize me completely."

"Very well, Anna Arcadievna, I shall tell you this much," continued Rostoptshin, still speaking in Russian, "our country is like the stomach of Potemkin; after all is said and done, it can digest everything, even a Napoleon."

"But what should we do?"

"What we should do? I have not yet said it to anyone, but I will tell you. Leave Moscow at once. The French will not come here—but still, you never know."

"But where should I go?"

"Go to your estate in the province of Kolomna, or further still, to your estate in the province of Tamboff. I say it again, the French will not be allowed to cross the frontier, but there will be much unrest here and at your age, Princess," added Rostoptshin in a half whisper, "one should not expose oneself. The troops will be armed and mobilised; there will be much excitement."

The Princess cast a supplicating glance upon a Christ in white marble, standing in the oratory surrounded by the ancient family ikons. "I don't understand it at all," she murmured, "Is it possible that here, in our ancient capital of Moscow, in the midst of our holy relics, under the protecting eye of God, and under your rule, Count, we are not safe?"

"You are a brave woman," said Rostoptshin, "you fear the thunder, but you are not afraid of

Bonaparte; you even exhibit his portrait in silk upon your walls. Well, do as you think best, Princess," he added, rising to take his leave, "it was my duty to warn you. Under the seal of secrecy I have even told you my own personal opinion. This is what our strong minds have obtained by glorifying Bonaparte. It is maddening when one thinks of it. In the west, cobblers are engineering revolutions in order to grow rich, whilst in our own country, the grand seigneurs are agitating and creating trouble in order to become, at all costs, cobblers. And all this is the work of their leader, Speranski."

"You are still hostile to Speranski but what has he done to you?" asked the Princess.

"What has he done to me? I shall tell you. He has been extolled to the clouds, and yet he is only a bureaucrat of a bigger calibre; the chancellery is his forum; the thousands of papers, very injurious and hurtful, are his trumpets and cymbals. They have done very well to seal him up now; now he has himself become a waste paper, numbered and relegated to the archives. But you do not share my view, Princess. I greet you." Rostoptshin kissed the hand of Anna Arcadievna, and walked towards the door. "Yes," he said, standing still, "something else. My prediction of this morning with regard to Perovski has come true sooner, alas, than I imagined it would."

"What is it, mon Dieu?" exclaimed the Princess.

"On my return home, I found an order commanding all officers, wherever they were, to rejoin

their regiments at once. I shall summon him to-morrow very early. Should Perovski ask for it, I can grant him two or three days more to make preparations for his departure."

The Princess, utterly crushed, stretched out her hand for the bell, but was unable to find it.

III

THE next morning Perovski learned that all officers were ordered to rejoin their regiments at once.

As different as the two sisters were from each other—Xenia, with her golden curls, blue eyes, vivacious countenance, and plump hands, and Aurora, dark, thin, and always pensive—so dissimiliar, both physically and morally, were the two friends, Ilya Tropinin and Basil Perovski. When still a child, Basil had been brought from Potshep, an Ukrainian property belonging to his father, to Moscow, where, under the guidance of tutors and a Little-Russian preceptor, he was educated at a pensionat, until old enough to enter the University. His studies finished, he left for St. Petersburg, where he entered the military service. He was well-read, knew French and German thoroughly, and loved music. Brave, even over-courageous, and brimful of enthusiasm for the ideals of military life, he, like many of his comrades-in-arms, harboured a secret admiration for the idol of the moment, who had subdued the French Reign of Terror and the Jacobins, the plebeian Cæsar, whom farsighted men were already beginning to suspect and accuse.

Basil was one of the real Europeans of St. Petersburg. He thought—and was not even afraid of saying

it aloud on occasion—that the Court had been wrong to decline Napoleon's proposition when the latter demanded the hand of the Grand-Duchess Catherine, the sister of Alexander I. In his opinion, Bonaparte, scorned by the Imperial family, would sooner or later think of reprisals, and would make Russia pay dearly for such an indelible outrage. Dark, tall, broad-shouldered, with a neat waist, and irreproachably dressed, Basil attracted all eyes by his general air of intelligence, his polite manners, his distinguished speech and above all, by the brilliancy of his pensive brown eyes, his affable smile, and his original and witty conversation. Among his comrades he was considered a jovial companion, indeed, the very soul of their gatherings. Women pronounced him enigmatic, whilst his military chiefs thought him an officer with a future. Passionately fond of music he had learned, almost without any teaching, to sing and accompany himself on the piano; he made music not only for himself but also for his comrades; he even sang at social gatherings. For some time he and several other staff officers were members of a masonic lodge; these young men had conceived the project of establishing themselves on the distant Japanese island of Socu, as Sakhalin was then called, and of founding a republic there. The project, as may be imagined, had to be abandoned for lack of funds. As for love-affairs, no one knew that Perovski had ever had any. He laughed heartily at the gallants and fops of the town. Therefore, everyone was very much surprised to hear that this handsome, careless and gay officer

of the Guards, who was still too young to marry, had not only fallen in love, but was seriously thinking of marriage. Perovski's origin was unknown in society and to his comrades; he was simply called "the handsome Little-Russian."

Long afterwards Basil remembered that last Tuesday at the Neledinski-Meletzkis, at their house in the Mjasnitskaja, to which he had been taken by his old comrade, Ilya Tropinin. The older people had played cards in the study and conservatory, whilst the others danced in the grand salon; sumptuous dresses brought from Paris and scarcely clinging to the shoulders of the young women were exhibited that evening in unaccustomed profusion. An interminable cotillion, of which the poets sang: "Cette image mobile de l'immobile éternité," was in full swing. Basil was dancing like the others, to the music of Santi's orchestra, when, in the midst of lilies and roses, for the first time he caught sight of a graceful brunette seated a little apart from the dancers. Not far from her, and devouring her with his eyes, stood the dark immigrant, Gerambeau, known all over Moscow as a lover of music and painting. He assured everyone that he was an officer of the Hussars of Death, a mysterious legion which had flourished some little time before; he wore a dolman with silver buttons engraved with Death's heads; it suited his pale complexion very well. When he first noticed the unknown beauty, Perovski thought: "Not bad looking, that little thin girl," but when he had looked more closely into those dark eyes with their tranquil gaze, at the pale

countenance, the magnificent hair negligently twisted high upon her head, he suddenly felt that the young woman had entered his heart as its sovereign, and would never leave it again. The severe beauty and pensive expression which almost seemed disdain, had fascinated him. She practically never smiled ; when she was merry, one only saw it in her laughing eyes and raised upper lip. Gerambeau, the Hussar of Death, was not her only admirer ; there were several other young men who paid assiduous court to Aurora. Among them was also the wealthy, aged, but tall and clever widower, Cuslanoff, who had been wounded in the war against the Turks when he served under Suvaroff. Like Gerambeau, he followed Aurora silently everywhere she went. The wits called them "the nymph Galatea and the Cyclop Polyphem." Mitia Oussof and the two Galitzins also swelled the group of admirers of the new Galatea, all of whom, however, seemed voluntarily to efface themselves before the conqueror, Perovski. He almost haunted the house of the Princess. One day he was on the point of declaring himself. It was after the Easter mass, which the Princess had attended at the Church of St. Yermolay ; Aurora received the guests in the palm salon and then they both sat down near the piano. While the music of a waltz, by Romberg, floated round them, Perovski essayed to open his heart to her but the words refused to come. He left the house, dismayed that he had not been able to speak.

Ilya Borisovitsh Tropinin had long guessed his friend's secret. Tropinin was a descendant of an

old, noble, but not very rich, Moscow family. He had made Perovski's acquaintance at the University, and had become greatly attached to him, not only because of similarity of character, but also because he listened more patiently than any of their comrades to Basil's passionate dreams of military glory, should the day ever come when Russia would have to measure her strength with him who was the god of the young men of that day. Bonaparte, Toulon, the Pyramids and Marengo, were the subjects of all their talks.

They read contemporary literature, but whilst Basil preferred the French Romanticists, Ilya would blush to his ears at their daring language and expressive details. Tropinin devoted much of his leisure time to drawing, for which he had a decided talent. "Decidedly," said Ilya, one day, twisting his blond curls as they fell over his grey eyes, always somewhat exalted in expression, "it is as I say, Basil, I am afraid of women, and I shall never marry. I shall enter a monastery, I think." At Moscow, they called him "the monk" and his fellow-students declared that in his desk he had arranged a kind of *iconostasis* before which he was in the habit of officiating and singing Te Deums. The University brought the two friends very close together; together they enjoyed the lectures by famous professors, and when they left the University, the Rector said to Perovski: "You will be a field-marshal." Then turning to Tropinin, he added: "And you the happy father of a numerous family."

The two friends met again in 1812, when Basil

and Dmitri Oussof, a cousin of Tropinin, and, like Perovski, an officer on the general staff, were sent to Moscow to copy some military plans in the Archives. For a month they worked far from the whirl of Moscow on the Oussoff's estate of Novosselovka, and then returned to Moscow. At that time, Ilya Tropinin, contrary to all his youthful prognostications, was not only married, but blissfully happy. He dreamed of marrying Perovski to his sister-in-law, and the meeting of his friend with Aurora promised well for his dreams. At Easter, Perovski could talk only of Aurora, by the end of May he was madly in love with her—but as yet he had not declared his love.

The news that all officers had to rejoin their regiments at once greatly troubled Perovski. He asked and obtained a respite of four days from the Commandant. A short week before he had paid a visit to Tropinin, and the two friends had gone out for a stroll on the boulevards. "And so it is decided that Napoleon is against us?" Tropinin had asked.

"Yes, but I still hope we shall not have war," Perovski had replied, with some hesitation.

"And why?"

"It is but a rumour spread by the blustering bravadoes; in a month's time it will be all forgotten."

"But why then all this excitement and the gathering of troops on the frontier?"

"Precautionary measures, that is all."

"That is easy to say, my dear fellow. Your idol is at last smashed. They expect to see him

here even; to-day he is at Dresden, to-morrow he will be on the Niemen, on the Dvina, perhaps even nearer still."

"Never mind. I don't believe it," repeated Perovski, pacing up and down the boulevard. "Napoleon is not a traitor, and it must be admitted that we should not have chosen ambassadors of such limited intelligence, such fools even to send him. How could such a bilious and suspicious man as Kurakin have been chosen? It is these needle pricks, these continual provocations and this playing with England, his enemy, which have caused all the trouble. Speranski, the only true statesman we possess, has not only been removed from the vicinity of the throne, but has also been branded as a traitor. Why? Because he dared to prefer to the laws of Tsar Alexis, the ingenious code of laws promulgated by him who put an end to the state of revolutionary anarchy reigning in France, and re-established order in Europe."

"That is an old story. Freedom is excellent, but what about the murder without a trial of the Duc D'Enghien? After having been in Rome, Vienna and Berlin, everywhere except in our country, Napoleon intends to come here and allow our women, our sisters, my wife, your fiancée, if you had one, to be insulted by his soldiers."

"Listen, Ilya," Perovski sharply interrupted him. "One can forgive everything to women, even their cowardice and their gossip, but it is quite another question when a man knowing the world and life, talks as you are doing. Are you not ashamed? What need, I ask you, has Napoleon

of us, who, after all, alas, are only a half-Scythian horde ? "

" And yet it was to the Tsar of this horde to whom your idol was so anxious to be related."

" Come here, listen, and be reasonable," said Perovski, more calmly. " The matter is as clear as the day. The great man went to the Pyramids for Egyptian hieroglyphics, to Italy for the marbles and Raphael's pictures ; all that is quite comprehensible, but what could he find here ? Vyazma gingerbread, Yaroslav bast, or our ballet dancers ? No, Ilya, you need have no fear for our dancers. It is not for us to threaten with our boar-spears the conqueror of kings, the master of half of Europe. It was not vainly that he offered to divide the universe with our Emperor. Creative genius that he is, he had the right. . . . "

" It was not only Alexander whom he thus wished to entice, but God Almighty, since he had the generosity to include Him in the inscription for the proposed medal : ' Yours are the heavens, mine is the earth.' You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Perovski ! "

Perovski hesitated, he was losing the thread of the conversation. " You are repeating the follies invented by German pamphleteers," he said, after a short silence. " Napoleon ! . . . . Are you aware that though thousands of years may pass, his glory will not die ? He is the incarnation of truth and goodness. His heart is the heart of a child. Is it his fault that he is being forced to make war, to see the inferno of battles ? He, who is so fond of silence, of starry nights, who

loves the poetry of Ossian, the sad music of Paesiello with its sweet and mysterious harmony? Have I not often told you that when at school at Brienne, he used to hide and read the romances of chivalry, weeping over the Matilda of the crusades, and dreaming of the day when he would be able to give the world felicity and constant peace?"

"Then why is he, this idol whom you adore, now that he has reached the summit, why is he constantly on the move?" asked Tropinin.

"Don't you understand it?"

"Well, explain it to me."

"It is because Napoleon is the elect of heaven and is not an ordinary mortal at all."

Tropinin shrugged his shoulders. "That is a weak argument," he said, "a sonorous newspaper phrase and nothing more; a useful formula by which all iniquities and violations of the rights of others may be explained away."

"No, listen," cried Basil, insistently. "In order to understand him truly you must imagine yourself in his place. After establishing order, he could not let the French, that fickle people, rest; had he done so, he would have only paralysed the native energy of his country, extinguished the flame of great enterprises, of daring adventures. The tsars and kings are strong in the aureole of their national memories, in their past, ten centuries old. For him, his past, his dynasty is himself."

"Many thanks for the manner in which you justify all the violence of the modern Attila. But I shall tell you one thing, praise him as much as

you like; but mind, if he dares to invade Russia; all your philosophy will be wasted. Here he will be treated like any ordinary robber, like the thief of Tushino and other usurpers."

"Calm yourself. He will not come to Russia; he does not need it," replied Perovski, in a low voice, pacing up and down the boulevard.

"It would be sweet to sip hydromel through your lips," said Tropinin. "Remember, however, that should he come, I shall be the first to seize a spike and march with the others against this archstrategist, this leader of kings. And we shall show him, this Napoleon, that he is after all only one man, while Russia is an entire nation."

Long afterwards, Perovski blushed whenever he remembered this conversation and his error.

IV

New rumours, persistent and sinister, thoroughly shook Perovski's enthusiasm for Napoleon. He learned from reliable sources of the perfidious proceeding of the Emperor against the family of the Dukes of Oldenburg and other German princes related to the Tsar. The presence of the French on the banks of the Niemen, a veritable perjury on the part of Napoleon, completely shattered the ideas he had conceived of his demi-god. The embarassed Perovski was quite unlike his former self.

A horseback ride had been arranged for the next evening. Xenia, her husband, Aurora, Perovski and Mitia Oussoff were of the party. The gentlemen's horses were taken at Mamonoff's. The party left the faubourgs, and rode across the Poklonnaya hill. It had rained heavily a few hours previously. Aurora was riding Barss, a magnificent bay horse, and keeping it well in hand, though the noble animal, shaking its bit, accelerated its pace more and more, prancing on the soft dewy path across the fields. The young couple were soon ahead of the rest of the party, and then Aurora reined in her horse.

"Are you going soon?" she asked.

"I have a few days respite."

" I suppose you will find it a little hard to march against the genius you have so greatly admired," said Aurora, splashing through the rain pools. " Besides, you will have to leave so many dear friends behind you."

After a short gallop, they fell into pace with one another.

" The friends will console themselves," answered Basil. " They will pray to God."

" For whom ? "

" For the absent and the travellers, as it is said in the scriptures."

" And those who are either ill or suffering will remain at home ; shall one pray for them too ? " asked Aurora, again breaking into a canter, and hardly visible in the dusk in her black riding habit and cendrillon hat with a red feather.

" I do not know if those who remain at home will suffer," said Basil, rejoining her. " Is it not said : woe unto the absent ? "

" The misfortunes of the latter are as great as those of the former," said Aurora, holding in her horse. " War is a profound mystery."

The trampling of the horses behind them came nearer and soon two riders passed them in a quick gallop. They were Xenia and Mitia Oussoff.

" And how are your race horses ? " gaily shouted Mitia. " Mine was given to me by Mamonoff's jockey, Rakitka."

Xenia, in a red riding habit and long veil, passed by so quickly that her sister had no time to call to her. Tropinin followed at a measured pace, on a long and heavy English racer with a short tail.

"How nice he is, this Mitia," said Aurora, when Perovski was again by her side. "With what impatience he is looking forward to the war, the battles. . . ."

"His is a heart of gold," added Perovski. "He has just written an enthusiastic letter to his chief begging the latter to entrust him with the first perilous message that he will have to send. But what is really odd is the fact, that in spite of everything, Mitia expects to fall in love during the campaign and to marry in the autumn."

The riders again galloped for a verst* among the shaggy bushes and hillocks, and then once more they fell into a gentle jog-trot, side by side.

"How beautiful the sunset is," said Perovski, looking back. "Moscow seems a mass of flames; the crosses and steeples look like so many burning masts."

Aurora looked for a long time towards Moscow. "Will you do me a favour if I ask it of you?" she said, at last.

"I promise you," replied Perovski.

"Well then, tell me frankly, without any ambiguity, what you now think of Napoleon."

"I have made a mistake, and I shall never forgive myself for it."

Aurora's eyes sparkled with surprise and pleasure. "Yes," she continued, after a short silence, "terrible events are approaching, this mysterious sphinx, this Napoleon. . . ."

"A traitor, and our enemy!" cried the young man. "I shall leave everything, I shall give up

*3,500 English feet.

everything, my life, and what is even dearer to me than my life, to march against this enemy!"

Aurora looked at him with rapture. "I was not mistaken then," she thought. "We hold the same opinions, we have the same ideals! You are right, right," she added aloud, "and. . . ." she blushed, tried to speak, failed, and lapsed into silence. Then, lashing her horse, she jumped over a ditch skirting the road, and galloped across the fields to rejoin the other riders. They all gathered at the entrance of the already darkening wood, and riding together, returned to Moscow in the moonlight. In the quarter of Novinski, Perovski pointed out to Aurora the windows of his apartments, where, during the last few days, he had passed through much agony and torment of mind. Hs wished to leave the party here but that was not permitted so he rode on with the others. The old Princess was expecting the riders, and until supper, she listened to their stories and gay conversation.

"You did not finish the sentence you began; you were going to tell me something," said Perovski, after supper. Aurora silently went to the piano; the half-lit room echoed with harmonious sounds. She sang the favourite romance of an old friend of her grandmother, Neledinski-Meletzki:

> "Witnesses of my sadness,
> Forests consecrated to silence."

"Basil Alexeievitsh," said Xenia to Perovski, "sing us that romance, you know, the one I am so fond of."

Perovski approached the piano, and placing his hands upon the back of Aurora's chair, sang the lines by the same author:

"Forgive me the indiscreet murmuring,
Oh! sovereign of my soul."

Everyone was deeply moved. Basil, greatly agitated, was silent, looking down upon the hair and shoulders of Aurora bending over the piano. Tropinin wiped away his tears.

"How beautifully you sing," he said.

"How could a man with a soul like that take the part of Napoleon?" Aurora tried to signal to Tropinin, but he did not see.

Perovski and Tropinin left, and Xenia remained for the night with her sister; they both passed into the oratory, where it was dark. After a short silence, Aurora suddenly arose and said: "No, I cannot."

Returning to the drawing room, she sat down to the piano and started to play her favourite sonata, the Sixteenth, by Beethoven, then fell again into a reverie.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Xenia, kissing her.

Without replying, Aurora again started to play.

"Are you thinking of him?" Xenia asked again.

"Yes, he will soon leave here, and we shall never see each other again."

"Why this idea?" asked Xenia, covering her sister with kisses. "He will return. It all depends upon you, if you give him a little hope."

Aurora did not reply. " Why did I ever meet him ? Why have I grown to care for him ? " she thought, bending over the piano and continuing to play amid her tears. " Would it not have been best never to have been born, never to have lived ? "

V

RETURNING to her own apartment, Aurora dismissed her maid and began to undress. Without lighting a candle, she took off her dress, slipped on a nightgown and sat down on the nearest chair. The moon was pouring waves of light through the open windows. Aurora undid her plaits, retwisted and undid them again. Her gaze was lost in empty space, as if the caressing and meditative eyes of Perovski were still rivetted upon her.

"Oh, those eyes, those eyes!" she murmured. The bronze ornamented mahogany furniture surrounding her reminded her of something dear and distant. It had belonged to her mother, and Aurora's thoughts travelled back to the little provincial town where she had formerly lived, to the cottage of her father, to the first years of her childhood when her mother was still alive. Aurora's mother, a daughter of Anna Arcadievna, had fallen in love with an excellent and handsome young man, a poor infantry officer of whom the Princess did not approve. The girl eloped, therefore, and married the man of her choice. She had two daughters to whom she gave the romantic names of Aurora and Xenia. Aurora scarcely remembered the roving life, full of privations, she had led with her parents, but she did remember the

love and affection of her mother, and the time when her father, on leaving his regiment, had been elected by the nobility of his district, and had entered the administration of his native town. There he possessed a house overlooking the steep banks of the river; a large garden, half orchard and half flower beds, surrounded the house. Aurora remembered every corner of that shady garden, the shubbery where she used to play with Xenia, the bushes of lilac in flower, the honeysuckle where she had for the first time caught a blue butterfly with golden dots, the hillock whence one had a fine view of the town and the fields, and the old birchtree under the shadow of which the two sisters buried their favourite dolls before leaving the country. They were not ignorant of the fact that they had a grandmother who was rich and a Princess, that she never left the place where she lived, far away in a strange land, and that she was angry with their mother, and, therefore, wrote but rarely. Aurora remembered one snowless, muddy winter, when she was only ten. An epidemic was raging in the town. One morning when the girls were going to wish good-morning to their mother, they were forbidden to enter her room as she was dangerously ill. Aurora never forgot the sinister silence that reigned in the house, the sad countenances, the tear-reddened eyes, and especially the morning when they were taken into the drawing room and there saw stretched out upon the table, a motionless, terrifying form, clad in white and with a white veil over her face, and were told that this cold, motionless form was their mother. The

poor children began to cry and to call their mother : " Mamma, mamma, wake up ! " They could not believe that their mother was no longer among the living. Aurora remembered how bitterly their father wept at the cemetery, how he beat his breast and tore his hair. Then came their departure in a snowstorm. They were taken to a cousin of their father's, Peter Andreevitsh Kramalin, who lived on his estate Diedinovo, not far from the town. The doctor had ordered that the children should remain there all the summer. She remembered a spring passed in the same village, the new butterflies and the lilac which no longer charmed her, and again, a summer with their uncle, when their father often came to see them. This uncle, old and a widower, was a great sportsman. In spite of his age he was constantly hunting, sometimes with the hounds and sometimes with his gun alone. His housekeeper, old Illinishna, looked after the two sisters. They used to long to accompany their uncle on his hunting trips, and one morning, unable any longer to resist their appeal, he mounted them on horseback. Xenia was afraid, but Aurora, firmly seated on her dead cousin's mount, made a few turns, and henceforth thought of nothing else but riding. Coco, white as milk, was a contemporary of his master, but was nevertheless still a good runner and gave prompt obedience to the reins.

" Dear Uncle Peter," begged Aurora, " let me go for a ride on horseback accompanied by the groom."

Then Coco was saddled and brought trium-

phantly up to the flight of steps before the big door of the house ; the slip of a girl offered a thin slice of black bread and salt to her favourite, and then lightly jumped into the saddle.

" You are not a ittle girl, you are a veritable street boy ! " said Illinishna, shaking her head. And " Miss, miss ! " the groom often cried behind her, finding himself unable to keep pace with Aurora.

" Dear uncle," said Aurora, one day, " let me shoot with your gun, I beg of you."

Uncle Peter thought a moment, then he unhooked his gun from the wall, loaded it and showed the girl how to shoulder a gun and how to take aim, and then allowed her to practise shooting in the garden. This game was repeated several times. One evening in the autumn, when the uncle was out hunting in the wood, a shot was heard in the house. Illinshnia and the servants came hurrying from all sides and found Aurora in the master's room enveloped in a cloud of smoke. She explained that she had seen people running and shouting after a mad dog ; she had been playing there with her sister, and in spite of the latter's remonstrance, she had seized the gun, taken aim and fired. The wounded animal had fallen, and had been dispatched by its pursuers. The child was pale and trembling, shedding tears copiously ; she scarcely seemed to understand what she had done.

" But you little madcap," said her uncle on his return home. " How did you dare to fire ? "

" I saw everybody running and shouting : ' a

mad dog, a mad dog,' and so I seized the gun."

" Yes, but suppose that instead of the dog you had hit one of the people ? "

Aurora only wept by way of reply.

When her father next came to see them he quarrelled with Peter Andreevitsh because he took the girls with him on his hunting trips, yet he allowed them to stay there another summer. As for Aurora, she used to dream at night of Coco and her gun.

VI

One day Valerian Andreevitsh Kramalin came to Diedinovo, and in the presence of his children read aloud a letter which he had just received from his mother-in-law, in Paris, the Princess Sheleshpanski. A year before the Princess had learned of the death of her daughter and had been very ill since, not expecting to live. Her health, however, had improved, and, therefore, she now wrote to her son-in-law offering to receive the two orphans into her house. The letter also contained a draft for a considerable sum of money. There were numerous consultations between uncle and nephew, and even quarrels concerning the future of the children. Towards the end of the autumn the father took the girls to the institute of St. Catherine at Moscow.

The two sisters then corresponded frequently with their grand-mother. At the end of the second year they informed the Princess that their father was dangerously ill; winter passed, summer came, and the girls wrote a desperate letter to their grandmother telling her that their father was dead and that they were in mourning, that all the pupils of the institute were going to pass their vacation with their parents, but that they alone, poor orphans, had nowhere to go, since their good Uncle Peter had left Diedinovo and gone to pass a season at a

watering place. The grand-mother replied that they should pray to God for their parents and arm themselves with patience; she also sent them a French book that was very instructive, and dealt with the duties of young girls.

Thus several sad years passed for the orphans, and then, one day, they were called to the principal's room at an unaccustomed hour. On entering that austere apartment, they saw a grand old lady seated near the principal. She had powdered hair, a black shawl over her shoulders, a protecting air, and somewhat stiff manners. Without saying a word, she examined the two sisters through her gold-rimmed lorgnette, turned to the principal as if about to say something, then suddenly burst into tears, and abandoning all etiquette, passionately kissed the little girls. It was the Princess Anna Arcadievna Sheleshpanski, who had made up her mind, out of pity for the two sisters, to leave Paris and take up her residence at Moscow.

Once she had become acquainted with the two orphans, the old lady grew to love them with all her heart; she fondled them and spoiled them, coming to see them nearly every day at their institute. Aurora had decided talent for music, whilst Xenia preferred dancing. Their education finished, she re-opened her house in the Patriarchal Ponds quarter which had been closed so long, and introduced her grand-daughters into society. There was no longer any question of her weakness or her old age; everyone spoke of the salon of the Princess, decorated with black, printed leather, studded with golden nails, of her carriages drawn

by six black and four light bay horses, of her balls and soirées. After the marriage of Xenia, the Princess made her will, leaving her estate, Lybanovo, to Aurora, and Yartzovo, to Xenia. Then she began to worry about the future of Aurora, who, under various pretexts more or less plausible, had already refused several very advantageous offers of marriage.

"I am not going to leave you, grand-mamma," said Aurora, as she caressed the old lady. "I do not want anything. Am I not perfectly happy? We go out together, I have Barss, I study singing, the piano. I read a great deal, for you have a wonderful library. Don't talk to me of marriage, let me live with you always."

The old lady dried her tears, and admiring the severe beauty of Aurora, thought: "After all, why should she not remain a little longer with me? God, in His mysterious way, is thus making her redeem the fault committed by her who so easily abandoned me." In her unconscious egotism the Princess always considered the marriage of her daughter an irreparable fault, although the latter had never ceased to honour and respect her, and, loving her husband dearly, had lived happily and contentedly to the end.

Aurora forgot Barss only for her music and her favourite books. Her grand-mother's library consisted of cupboards full of Russian books and several foreign editions. The Russian books had been collected by the Princess' husband, who had been a friend of Novikoff and other Moscow Martinists, whilst the foreign books had been brought from

Paris by Anna Arcadievna herself. Since she had left the institute, she had found time between her solfege and the roulades of Félice Andrien, despite balls and concerts, to read a good deal of contemporary Russian literature. She did not care much for Krijanin, Derjavin and Dmitriev, but she devoured the historical writings of Karamsin, the fables of Kryloff, the poetry of Joukovski. Among the French authors, Dalembert, De Maistre, Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre charmed her for a long time. With them she dreamed of a rejuvenated and transformed society. But all the world was then talking of Bonaparte ; Bonaparte was ever in her thoughts ; he appeared to her as a legendary supernatural hero. At first, she looked upon him as a beneficent genius who had mysteriously made his appearance upon the earth in order to pour out upon humanity the promises of a hitherto unknown happiness, and to shed the dazzling rays of his glory upon it. One day, however, her grand-mother received a parcel containing pamphlets published in London and Belgium, and also a recent publication from the pen of Mme. de Stael, and then Aurora's ideas underwent a drastic change. Some years before, when she had heard of the assassination of the Duc D'Enghien, shot without a trial at the Fort of Vincennes, she had shed bitter tears and cried in despair : " The poor man ! What has he done ? " After perusing those pamphlets, Napoleon, the destroyer of ancient cities and European kingdoms, appeared to her in a different light. Instead of the ideal hero, she saw in him only an ambitious

man armed with a boundless egotism ; she longed to be a man and to join those daring warriors who were going to fight the new Djengis-Khan.

When she first made the acquaintance of Perovski she had listened with a mocking smile to his dithyrambic about Napoleon, then, influenced by the overflowing, gushing enthusiasm of the young officer, she had modified her ideas, without exactly abandoning them. Then came the news of Napoleon's probable invasion of Russia. Perovski and the Princess still took his part, whilst Rostoptshin and Tropinin openly abused him. When the rumour became more persistent, Aurora once more felt her soul penetrated by a deep hatred for the " Corsican monster," who was threatening not only to invade her country, but also to separate her from him to whom she had given her heart. " Three months," she said to herself, consolingly, " will soon pass, and then he will return and declare his love."

But when at last, Perovski and all the other officers on leave had been summoned by Rostoptshin and ordered to rejoin their regiments at once, her grief knew no bounds. Will he return ? she continually asked herself. Why does this personification of violence, of so many terrors, this Napoleon think of attacking us ? Will not an avenging hand strike him as it did Marat, his predecessor ? " Oh God," she prayed, " confound the monster, and strike him with your wrath ! "

VII

On the eve of his departure Perovski dined with the Princess ; several people were present, among them two or three girl students from the institute, school companions of Aurora and Xenia, who had come with their brothers. In spite of the gravity of the times, the young people were freely enjoying themselves. They played charades and secretaire, talked of the last few balls, of possible and forthcoming marriages. The Princess, dressed in a dark gown, sadly looked on. Before tea was served, Xenia opened the piano and asked one of her friends to sing ; a few of the guests were walking in the garden among whom was Aurora. Absorbed by the singing, she did not notice that the garden had gradually become deserted until suddenly lifting her eyes, she saw Perovski approaching her. The moon was shedding its bright light over the garden, the avenues and the fountains, whilst the perfume of flowers scented the air. Every path and every bush seemed to be replete with a mysterious dusk and perfume.

" You are here ? " said Basil, looking at her with respectful admiration.

" Yes," she replied, slowly, as if in search for words. " This evening we have talked of everything except of the war, and yet it is the only

subject of which everyone is thinking in spite of himself. I want to tell you something. Last year I stayed with the Arkharoffs on their estate, you know. They have a picture gallery, and I particularly remember one painting, depicting a hunt in a vast park in the neighbourhood of Paris. It is a wonderful picture. The figures seem alive, and so do the rocks, the brooks and the trees."

"The Arkharoff collection is indeed a remarkable one."

"No, listen. . . . To the right, in a clearing, there is a pack of furious hounds pursuing a deer which would undoubtedly escape them were it not for a hunter hidden in the grove of trees, and waiting for the animal with his gun. This hunter, surrounded by gold-bedizened cavaliers, is Napoleon; he is wearing a blue uniform, a white waistcoat, and a three-cornered hat; he is stout, round, and looks happy, and as if carved in stone."

"Yes, stony," said Perovski, with a sigh.

"His full dusky face expresses self-satisfaction," continued Aurora. "Quite calmly he is taking aim at the panting animal. 'Fie, I have taken part in many a hunt,' I said to Elisa Arkharoff, 'and I assure you that this man is wicked, a coward and cruel. It is thus that Bonaparte ordered the Duc D'Enghien to be shot.'" Deeply moved, Aurora became silent.

"You are right," said Perovski. "The man is cruel and we shall repay him for his perjuries; he will one day recall to his memory his lying assurances of Tilsitt and Erfurt. I have been mistaken, I have been blind, and I am not ashamed

to admit it now. I am leaving here with the firm hope that our sacrifices, our efforts will triumph over our enemy. My only misfortune is. . . ." Perovski became embarrassed; he was silent. Aurora feared something dreadful, or that something extraordinary would happen.

"Forgive me," he said, suddenly, his voice trembling. "I am leaving, perhaps never to return—but. . . . No, it is beyond my strength." Aurora listened to him, motionless, her heart beating fast and furiously.

"It is impossible to keep silent," continued Basil. "I must speak. I love you, and therefore. . . ."

Aurora was silent; everything seemed to be whirling around her. After a moment's hesitation she extended her hand, which Perovski covered with passionate kisses, madly happy, and unable to believe.

"How? You consent? You. . . ."

"Yes, I am yours; thine," she added, in a half-whisper, and drooping her head.

They had now entered the main avenue of the park. Perovski talked to her of his love; he had loved her from the first moment he saw her, but he had never, until then, been able to muster enough courage to speak.

"Do you know everything about me?" he suddenly asked. "My own name is Perovski, but my father's name is different." And then he told Aurora of his past. She sat by his side, silently listening to his confession, and when he had finished, she asked: "Why do you tell me all this?"

"So that you may know everything about me. It is the secret of my father; I must keep it from everyone, but not from you."

Aurora gently pressed his hand. "And so you are the son of the Minister? Well, I am glad, not for you, but for him. But why is he keeping it a secret?"

Perovski pleaded the conventions, his father's position, etc.

"Do you love your mother? Has she looked well after you?"

Basil then told her of his childhood in Little Russia, of his meeting with his father before leaving for the University, then of his joining the service.

"And since then he has not seen you?"

"Yes, at St Petersburg."

"And he has not kept you with him?"

Basil was silent.

"I shall love your mother as dearly as I love you," said Aurora. "Your father will be proud of you once he knows you well."

The voice of Vlass, the old chamber valet of the Princess was now heard from behind the gate; he was calling for Aurora.

"Madamoiselle, your grand-mother wants you. The Meletzkis are leaving."

"Just one word," said Perovski, still clasping Aurora's hand. "Give me some token in remembrance of this hour, a flower, anything, no matter what."

Aurora took a little bunch of lilac from her bouquet, and handed it to the young man.

"Have you a portrait of yourself?" she asked.

"I have a miniature, painted by Ilya Tropinin. I intended to send it to my mother at Potshep, but for you. . . ."

"Very well, Ilya will make me a copy of it."

"No, no," exclaimed Perovski. "Here it is."

Aurora pressed the miniature to her bosom.

"Mademoiselle, mademoiselle, where are you?" Maremiasha, the housekeeper, cried from a distance.

Aurora slipped the portrait into her bodice, dried her eyes, and entered the house on the arm of Perovski.

"Now go to grand-mother," said Aurora, "and formally ask her for my hand, otherwise she might feel offended and refuse."

Basil was directing his steps towards the drawing room, when Aurora stopped him.

"No," she said, taking his hand, "let's go together." Pale, scarcely looking at anyone, she crossed the row of reception rooms, and leading Perovski to the Princess, who was standing in the doorway of the oratory, surrounded by her departing guests, she said, in a low voice: "Dear grandmother, this is my fiancé."

The Princess seemed amazed.

"How, without telling me anything about it? And how have you dared. . . ."

She turned to Perovski, but she could not restrain the tears suddenly welling up in her eyes; instead of scolding, she embraced him, and then, kissing Aurora, who had slipped to her knees, she blessed them and made the sign of the cross over them.

"Just like her mother, just like her; daring

and charming," repeated the old lady, sobbing and laughing at one and the same time. "Oh! my children, love each other and be happy."

No one now thought of leaving; everyone was rejoicing at the happy denouement of Aurora's love affair.

Champagne was served and the betrothal celebrated with enthusiastic toasts.

"Is it possible that this is our last farewell?" asked Perovski, when the moment of departure had arrived. "Whatever I do, I must leave here to-morrow." Tears trembled in his voice; all eyes were upon him.

"Au revoir until this autumn," said Aurora, simply, trying hard to smile, and pressing his hand.

"Au revoir! Au revoir!" said everybody.

Perovski left, and the young girl went to her room where she burst into tears. "No, no, this cannot be," she cried, pacing up and down the room, wringing her hands. "It is impossible. Oh, my God, inspire me, support me, protect me."

On his return to his apartments, Basil woke up his servant, lit a candle and wrote a note to Mitia Oussoff, telling him that the post-horses had been ordered for seven o'clock in the morning, and stating that he would expect him at that hour. They were to pass through Mojaisk and stop at Novoselovka where Mitia was to receive some arrears of rent due to his father. He had to pay Perovski back some money which he had borrowed from him. The note dispatched, Basil saw that it was already after one o'clock.

"It is nearly morning now," he murmured;

" the night is glorious. I shall take a stroll, and before leaving, call on Aurora to bid her a last farewell." He opened his window and fell into a reverie. " Perhaps I shall not be able to see her so early ; I think that I had better write her a line and take it myself. Who knows, she might, perhaps, come down to me for a few moments. She might be able to come as far as the Patriarchal Ponds with me if Maremiasha or Vlass accompanied her. We have scarcely been able to talk together, and I have so much I want to say to her."

He sat down to write. A few moments passed, then he heard a faint rustle behind the door. " It must be my servant returning from Mitia," thought Basil, continuing to write his letter. The door creaked. Perovski turned round and perceived a figure clad in a dark cloak, a thick veil hiding its face, standing on the threshold.

" Who is it ? " he asked, rising. Then he recognised Aurora. " You, you here ? " he exclaimed, drawing her to him and showering passionate kisses upon her cold hands, her face, and her hair. " How did you make up your mind, dearest ? How did you find your way ? "

" I wanted to see you once more."

He was beside himself with happiness. " I, too, have been thinking of you. I was just writing to you, look ! "

Aurora threw back her veil and intently gazed into her lover's face. " I do not know what is in store for us," she said, " but at this moment I am with you." Passionately she drew Perovski's head to her breast, and whispered amid her tears :

"What a martyrdom! Why did we ever meet? Will our separation be eternal? But no, I am mad. We shall see each other again, I believe it, I feel it." She dried her tears and continued more calmly: "During our walk you spoke lightly of prayer. You men have little faith. To-day, when you are entering upon a new phase of your life, when your duty is so vast and so heavy, will you be angry with me if. . . ."

"Speak! speak!"

"Our dear mother advised us, my sister and myself, to pray in our days of sorrow to the Holy Virgin and to implore her intercession. Give me your word that you will pray before this image."

"I give you my word."

She took from her pocket a small ikon and placed it round Perovski's neck. Her eyes were brimming with tears. "I have said everything, now good-bye."

"How, so soon? Where is divine justice? Only a moment together and months of separation before us? No, I shall give up everything, everything. I shall remain near you. Listen, I shall ask to be transferred to one of the regiments in garrison at Moscow."

"Don't do it, Basil. Have courage, duty calls you; your country calls you. I love you. I shall never love anyone but you, but I shall only feel happy if I know that you are doing your duty like a true patriot. How contemptible are those husbands, brothers, and fiancés who have hurriedly left for their estates, and how high above them you stand!"

"Stay a little longer, in the name of Heaven! Don't go yet," pleaded Perovski. "Just a few words more."

They heard the steps of the servant who now returned from his errand.

"Au revoir! Courage! We shall meet again!"

"I shall accompany you!" said Perovski.

She took his arm, and they walked towards the Bronnaia Street. Dawn was just breaking. Near the Church of St. Yermolay a *droshki** overtook them; but they paid no attention to the fare.

A little later, at seven o'clock, a post troika was driving Perovski and Mitia along the road leading to Mojaisk. Basil was passionately kissing the handkerchief which Aurora had forgotten in his rooms.

The two friends spent twenty-four hours at Novosselovka. Klim, the starosta,† who was managing the Oussoff estates complained, as usual, of the last harvest, the hard times, when he brought the arrears to his young master. Arina Yefimovna, the old nurse, prepared some pies, cakes and other delicacies for the two friends on their long journey. The two travellers had to separate here, each going in a different direction. Ilya Tropinin had asked Perovski to watch over the departure of Mitia, whom he loved tenderly.

"And you, Mitinka," said Yefimovna, as she busied herself in the house, her bunch of keys hanging at her waist, "don't you worry! Your father's house, the furniture and everything will be well cared for. Lyubanovo is not very far,

* Cab. † House-steward, inspector.

and the future mistress will come over and keep order, and the Princess herself said at the christening of her little grandson : ' I have good eyes, and from Moscow I shall see everything that is going on here.' I shall see that everything belonging to the masters is well taken care of. The old master is beyond the Volga, and the son is leaving for the army. It is for you to watch."

" Don't worry, Yefimovna," replied Mitia. " With such a good housekeeper as yourself, we can sleep safely."

Arina was flattered ; she dried her tears, twisting the end of her shawl on her breast.

" Listen Yefimovna," added Mitia. " When peace is declared he intends to marry, and they will all come to Lyubanovo, as their house at Yartzevo is too small. Then I, too, shall marry, and I shall celebrate my wedding in this very room.

" It is a little early for you, Mitinka, to think of these things. You must serve first," replied the good woman, weeping. Towards evening all their preparations were finished. The *kibitkas** were awaiting Mitia and Basil before the front door steps. Arina, quite exhausted, was weeping as she placed the portmanteaus and bundles ready for them.

" Why are you crying, Yefimovna ? " asked Perovski, endeavouring to keep up his spirits and appear jolly. " Have another look at your house," he added, turning to the curly-headed youth already seated in the vehicle. " See how well-

*Tilt waggon, vehicle.

kept it is; all thanks to your old nurse. I hope that in August or September we shall meet again here. As soon as peace is declared, we shall take our leave, or retire from the army altogether, and live happily upon our estates. Lyubanovo is only a stone's throw from here so we shall see each other very frequently."

Mitia, deeply moved, gave some last instruction to his nurse. "Mind you have my hunting gun carefully cleaned. You know where it is, and do not forget my fishing rods and grand-father's pistols." Then turning to Perovski, he said: "And now Basil, good-bye and au revoir."

The horse started. Yefimovna stood there crying and only waved her hand. Mitia looked on smiling, and made the sign of the cross over his friend and Arina. He could not take his gaze from the old house, surrounded by birchtrees with the pigeons hovering over the roof. It was here that he had been born, that he had grown up and lived until the moment that, at the request of his father, Ilya Tropinin took him to Moscow, and afterwards made him enter the service at St. Petersburg.

VIII

After Mitia had gone, Perovski inquired which was the best way from Klim, and then started towards Smolensk. Night began to fall. Not far from Novoselovka, he had to cross a river. From a distance, some buildings loomed vaguely in front of them. He asked his coachman what they were.

"It is Borodino," replied the latter.

"Is it a big village?"

"Yes, sir. Dimitri Nicolaevitsh bought some pigeons there last year."

The name of this little Russian village was destined to live for ever in the memory of the Russian people.

The horses ran on swiftly. Perovski, his last interview with Aurora still fresh in his mind, let himself dream. "I wonder what she is doing now my queen. How she loves me. Oh yes, I too believe in our happiness." Other images crowded ou his dreams of the future. He saw himself a child again at Potshep, a wealthy estate, in the province of Tshernigoff. He saw the immense mansion built by the architect Rostrello, the magnificent garden surrounding it, and leading down to the river. He remembered his mother, Anna Mik-

hailovna, a tall handsome woman with a dazzling complexion, enormous plaits of hair, and dark eye-brows. She was occupied in the master's house, where she lived in a separate wing with her two sons. During Basil's childhood the Count but rarely resided at the big house, and the children only used to see him either at church or when he went out for a walk escorted by his servants, or on a visit to his neighbours. The shady avenues of the garden, the elegant pavilions, the flower beds and the labyrinth of Italian poplars, where, in the absence of the Count, the two boys used to hide and play with the other children of the employés, all this remained in the memory of Perovski, blended with the tears his mother used to shed when she kissed them, and said: "My darlings, my little darlings! What will become of you? What will be your destiny?"

One incident especially remained very vividly in Perovski's mind. It was a pilgrimage to some convent which his mother had made with him and his brother Leo. The Count was at St. Petersburg where, they said, he held a very important post. On their return home, however, he came to Potshep to seek rest during the summer. The morning after his arrival at the castle, Anna Mikhailovna and the children were summoned to his study. The Count, in a dressing-gown of violet velvet, his hair powdered, was seated at his desk. His secretary, having finished his report, left the room.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Count when the boys had finished reciting "The Ode of Derjavin." "They are handsome boys, ma foi," and then he kissed them.

Arranging his necktie and the lace on his cuffs, he gave each of the boys a purse full of golden ducats. "That is to buy nuts with," he said, "and in token of remembrance of your father who has been a friend to me and a faithful servant. I promised him to look after his orphans; you must now get on with your studies, you will go to Moscow."

The children examined, with great curiosity, the study embellished with valuable paintings, statues and hunting trophies. Their mother, standing on the threshold, was drying tears of joy. Her eldest son went first, though Basil followed him very shortly. He studied with a foreign tutor, entered a private school, and afterwards the University. When he was eight, Basil learned, while at Potshep, from a village scribe, a drunkard by profession and a former pupil of an ecclesiastical seminary, that the Count was really his father, and that he did not acknowledge him for his pride's sake, as he was then living at St. Petersburg in close relation with the Emperor, whose cabinet minister he was.

"Is it forbidden to ministers to have children then?" Basil had asked, in surprise.

"You are nothing but a blockhead. Of course, it is forbidden them," the village savant had declared.

Basil had told his mother of this conversation, and she had warned him that if the Count knew that people were gossiping of his relationship to them, he would be very angry, and would no doubt deprive them of his bounty. Henceforth, when

Basil was questioned by his schoolmates about his father, he used to reply : " I have been an orphan since my birth ; my father was a small landowner in the Ukraine, and manager on the estate of a count."

When he had passed his last examinations at the University, he wrote a letter brimful of happiness to his mother. He had not seen her for seven years and told her that he was coming to see her, that he was very anxious to see her again and to revisit his native country, the dear old house, and also to enjoy a little liberty.

Just then, an old functionary, whom he had never seen before, called on him. He wore a grey tailed coat, had a honeyed smile on his lips, and a tuft of hair on his head. He congratulated Basil on behalf of the Count, and informed him that, thanks to the kindness of his generous benefactor, he had already been inscribed on the general staff, and that in order not to lose his priority of inscription, he had best make preparations to hurry to the capital. The functionary also handed Basil a sum of money sufficient for his equipment, and asked him when he thought he would be able to leave, as he wished to report to His Excellency.

" In a week," replied Basil, after a moment's thought. Ilya Tropinin could not prevail upon him to remain beyond the appointed time and enjoy himself a little in company with his fellow-students. Basil was impatient to reach St. Petersburg, and to see his father. " No doubt," he thought, " the Count will now acknowledge me. I am no longer the little villager of Potshep. I am an officer now,

If he does not yet give me his name and title, I don't even expect it, he will at least give me in private the title of son. I shall have a father, and what a father! Everyone praises his capabilities, his love of science and art, his loyalty and intelligence. I shall live in his house, shall see this statesman daily; he will allow me to call him father."

Basil's hopes were not realised. In his conversation the Count carefully avoided everything that could betray their relationship; he thought it as yet inopportune for his son to reside with him. The same old functionary, employed in the Count's private chancellery, came to see Basil at his hotel the morning after the interview between father and son when Basil had imagined himself at the summit of happiness. He was anxious to know where the young man intended to reside, whether he was satisfied with his service and with his superiors, and whether he required anything, but, at the same time, he gave him clearly to understand that his future depended upon two things: discretion and silence. Basil, with a somewhat heavy heart, declared that he bowed to the will of the Count.

Dimitry Nicolaevitch Oussoff, a young cousin of Ilya Tropinin, whom Basil had occasionally met at Moscow at the house of his friend, had also been appointed staff officer. He came to the capital and brought a letter from Ilya. Basil took the newcomer to his heart, and henceforth they became almost inseparable. Later on, when he met Aurora at the ball of the Neledinskis, Perovski confided to his new friend the sentiment which the

girl had evoked in his heart. Mitia, growing pale, and blushing in turns, pressed Basil's hand and said :

" Listen, Perovski, she is a wonderful girl. Ever since Ilya married Aurora's sister, a year ago, I have constantly thought of her. I considered, but still hesitated. I would have given everything —everything. . . . But now, having heard you, I relinquish to you the treasure."

" But why take things so seriously ? " asked Basil, surprised, and a little embarrassed. " What is a meeting at a ball ? Do we not make such acquaintances every day ? "

" You will see, you will see. Remember my words," replied Mitia. " I feel it, indeed, I am sure of it. Aurora will be yours."

He had not been mistaken : Perovski was leaving for the front the happy fiancé of Aurora.

At Mojaisk he had to take the post horses going in the direction of the headquarters of the army at Vilna. Arrived at the relay, he took a room, handed his order for post horses to the postmaster, and requested fresh horses as quickly as possible. The man went out to give some instructions but returned immediately.

" The horses will be ready in a moment," he said, " only. . . . " he seemed somewhat embarrassed, " travellers who have just arrived wish to speak to you."

" Who are they ? "

The postmaster showed him the travellers' waiting room. A thin, pale individual came to meet him. He was wearing a black dolman with silver

buttons. Basil retreated a step; he recognised Gerambeau. Behind the latter stood two men, one old and the other a youth, dressed in the very latest fashion.

"You are surprised," said Gerambeau, in French, "and so am I at this unexpected meeting. I was just going with these gentlemen to the estate of one of them, but since you are here. . . ."

"What is it you require?" asked Basil, drily.

"Monsieur Perovski," continued Gerambeau, in a trembling voice, "you understand we are both striving for the same goal, an honourable goal!

"As far as honour is concerned, allow me to be the best judge of that."

"You had better chances. I am ready to withdraw; I have even withdrawn."

"Yes, yes, but what is it?" cried Perovski, losing all patience.

Gerambeau was silent for a moment; his lips were twitching, his hands trembling; his companions looked at him in silence.

"Understand me, Monsieur Perovski," he said. "Two days ago I saw you at dawn in the company of a lady; she is not yet yours and yet you are pursuing her; you were walking with her."

"I was not aware that she had such voluntary spies around her. What do you mean by this? I insist upon knowing," Basil said, looking at him witheringly. "Upon satisfaction?" he asked. "A duel?"

"Precisely."

"Where? Here?"

"Even here, without quarter."

"But have you forgotten that we are at war, and that besides, I have no seconds?"

"Oh, one of these gentlemen will act for you." Gerambeau pointed to the young man.

"One does not ask such services from strangers," replied Basil. "Besides, you ought to know that she is my fiancée."

Gerambeau burst out laughing. Basil threw himself upon his rival. At this moment, the door opened and two travellers entered; one was an infantry officer and the other a military doctor, Mirtoff, whom Basil had met at St. Petersburg. They, too, were on their way to rejoin the first corps. Informed by the postmaster of what was taking place, they had hurried to intervene and to put an end to the quarrel. Basil gave his card to Gerambeau, saluted, and left the room.

Doctor Mirtoff, a big handsome man, always jolly, remonstrated with Perovski. "What an idea to waste your strength and your time upon that walking skeleton! Have we not enough living enemies before us?" he asked. Basil pressed his hand and mounted his kibitka.

"Don't forget, after the war," shouted Gerambeau, still boiling with rage.

"At your service," replied Perovski. The vehicle started at the sound of the bells. Basil thought of his departure from Moscow, of his farewell to Aurora.

"And this fellow has taken it into his head to try and frighten me, to take her away from me! Oh no, no-one will ever take her from me."

IX

When he reached the headquarters of the first army corps, Perovski hastened to write and inform his fiancée of his safe arrival. "Everyone," he wrote, "believes that war is inevitable; the troops are on the march, though, as yet, we have no accurate knowledge of anything."

In the meantime, great excitement prevailed at Moscow. . . . The foreign papers, the *Mouths of the Elbe* and the *Hamburg Courier* published daily alarming news. War was but a matter of days. They stated that suddenly, a month previously, the Tsar had left the capital and gone to Vilna, where the first army corps, under Barclay de Tolly, was stationed. However, all these rumours were unofficial.

When the officers on leave had been recalled, then the public heard that Rostoptshin had received a courier bringing important dispatches. At first, it was only whispered around, then said aloud, that without openly declaring war, Napoleon had entered Russian territory with an enormous army and had taken Vilna without encountering the slightest resistance. On July 6th, another courier brought Rostoptshin the Imperial Proclamation, which the Tsar had addressed to the city of Moscow. Then the people learned that Alexander had made a

vow not to sheathe his sword as long as one soldier of the enemy remained on Russian soil. People also repeated Alexander's words, spoken a year previously, when speaking of Napoleon: "There is not room for both of us in Europe. Tôt ou tard, l'un ou l'autre doit se retirer!"

On the sixteenth, the Tsar came to Moscow where he met with an enthusiastic reception. He received the members of the nobility and a deputation of merchants, and, two days later, left for St. Petersburg whence the Archives and the Treasury were being romoved to Yaroslav. Great excitement reigned at Moscow. The people talked of organising a national defence corps. The militia were exercised daily. The most eminent seigneurs, Counts Mamonoff and Soltikoff, declared that they would equip two cavalry regiments at their own expense. The Tver and the Nikitski boulevards were crowded with people anxious to learn the latest news. The ladies admired the new and brilliant uniforms of Mamonoff's Cossacks. The victory of Kliastitz, won by Wittgenstein towards the end of July, caused great joy. The officers of the guards and of the army, formerly the pride and ornament of Moscow balls, and now busily occupied carrying despatches, filled the Greek and Swiss confectioners all over the city in order to hear the news contained in the foreign papers, which was passed on in half-whispers. Everyone was waiting for a decisive victory. Time passed on, and on the 12th of August, Moscow was horrified to learn that the army had abandoned Smolensk. The road was now open for the French. People

argued over the quarrel that had arisen between the commanders-in-chief, Bagration and Barclay de Tolly. To this quarrel public opinion attributed the fact that the Russian troops were never to be found at the place where they should have repulsed the French attack. The wits of the day hummed the old lines, composed in earlier days:

"Vive l'état militaire,
Qui promet à nos souhaits
Les rétraites en temps de guerre,
Les parades en temps de paix!"

Barclay de Tolly, slow and prudent, and who, by his retreating movement, was endeavouring to entice Napoleon into the heart of a hostile country, was declared to be a traitor. People contemptuously mocked his name and called him Boltai-da-i-tolko—brag, and nothing more. On the other hand, they discovered the real chief and saviour of Russia: Bog-rati-on—the God of the army! But it was Kutuzoff, the conqueror of the Turks who was appointed commander-in-chief. It is true that the Emperor did not like him, and some of the initiated maintained that the Tsar had said: "The nation has desired it. I have consented, but I wash my hands of the result." The name of Napoleon was changed, according to the Apocalypse, into that of Apollyon, the Angel of the Abyss, and someone discovered, again in the Apocalypse, that the Anti-Christ would be hurled down by the hand of the Archangel Michael. Now Kutuzoff's Christian name was Michael. People therefore expected soon to hear of the speedy extermination of Napoleon and his armies.

In the meantime the wounded from Smolensk began to arrive at Moscow. The city was rapidly becoming deserted. The ladies, for whom, according to Rostoptshin, the Fatherland was the Kousnetzki Bridge and Paris the Kingdom of Heaven, these ladies became enthusiastic in the national cause and pestered the military as to when the decisive battle would take place. Mixing up chronological dates and events, they would exclaim : " Did not Minin, Pojarski and Dimitry Donskoi drive out the Poles ? "

No foreign enemy had trod the soil of Russia for a century, and now suddenly. . . . The Moscovites therefore cried out in indignation when they realised that whilst in June everyone had refused to believe in the possibility of war, already in July, Russia was being invaded. Many members of the nobility still gave and attended balls and went to the theatres, whilst others assiduously visited the convents and churches and forgot their favourite musicians and tenors, such as Rode, Martini, and the others. Many people devoted themselves to making bandages and lint, and listened to stories about the fallen and the wounded, and above all, much preparation was going on in the event of having to leave Moscow. There was no longer any talk of the sublime grandeur of Napoleon ; on the contrary, one heard either the French Royalist lines :

" O, roi, tu cherches la justice ! "

or the Russian patriotic verses :

" Arrogant Coulaincourt, vassal
Of the wicked Corsican ! "

Then too, the Tsar Alexander Pavlovitsh, who had declared that he would not make peace until the last soldier of the enemy had left the country, was no longer treated as an idealist and a dreamer. "You will see," said Rostoptshin, who, as everyone was aware, kept up an intimate correspondence with the Tsar, "you will see that in this universal upheaval, in the midst of Russia's unhappiness, his eyes will be opened. He has started with La Harpe and he will finish with Araktsheef; already he has gathered up the floating reins of the State chariot into his own firm hands. . . ."

A satire on enslaved Europe was freely quoted: "And there, on cardboard thrones, are seated cardboard kings."

Two months elapsed. Aurora frequently wrote to her fiancé. Perovski, in his letters, told her of their marches, of the places they had passed through, of Barclay-de-Tolly, and gave her enthusiastic descriptions of the junction of the two Russian armies and of the glorious, though unsuccessful battle of Smolensk. She knew all the rest from her brother-in-law. Thanks to the connections of the old Princess, Ilya Tropinin had daily access to the club of the Commandant-in-Chief of Moscow; it was by that name that the morning meetings at the house of Count Rostoptshin were known.

That which worried Ilya and the family of the Princess most was the absence of any news from Mitia Oussoff. They only knew that he had met Bagration's vanguard somewhere behind Vitebsk, and that he had taken part in an encounter under Saltanvi. Was it merely laziness on his part, or

were his letters lost in the disorder reigning at the camp ? " He has fallen in love with some beautiful Polish lady," said the old Princess, in the endeavour to tranquilise her grand-daughter and Ilya.

Time passed on. Aurora sent her fiancé all the news from Moscow ; told him of the general excitement reigning in the city, of the arrest and expulsion of some suspicious persons, mostly foreigners, and of Rostoptshin's proclamations. The Archives, relics and treasures of the churches, were being transferred to places of safety. Several of their acquaintances had already left the town. The most prudent of them, she wrote, had gone to their distant estates, whilst others were still dawdling, trusting implicitly to Rostoptshin, who criticised very adversely all those who hurried away from the city. The Count assured everyone that the scoundrel would never be able to enter Moscow. The common people, however, scented misfortune. Vlass Sissoitsh, the Princess' old valet, and Maremiasha, her housekeeper, repeated constantly : " We shall all end by being caught in the eel-trap ! " Thanks to the activity of her brother-in-law, Aurora managed to forward all her letters to her fiancé by the couriers leaving for the armies. These armies continually retreated towards Moscow.

X

About the middle of August, when the Russian troops were retreating towards Viazma, Basil received a letter from Aurora. "For some days," she wrote, "I have not been able to write to you, and yet I have great news for you. Grandmother has at last made up her mind to pack. You can hardly imagine the rummaging that has gone on in the house from cellar to attic. To-day, we can at last breathe a little more freely. Far from you, who are the joy of my life, I only have my music to console me. I used to play and sing in the room above—you know the one that looks out upon the garden. I have studied the overture you gave me, the aria from 'Jeune Troubadour,' and the Romance of Boildieu: 'S'il est vrai que d'être heureux.' But now I must bid good-bye to all these things—to the melodies we used to sing together. I shall soon now leave my own dear chamber, my paradise, where I have thought so much of you. I have made my devotions at the Church of St. Yermolay; how I have prayed for all of you! A certain Figuner, a sworn enemy of Napoleon, has recently been to see Rostoptshin; he has a plan, he says, which would put an end to the war in a day. The Count has advised him to submit his idea to headquarters.

"Our house is surrounded by numerous carts, which are being filled. Everyone is leaving Moscow; it is a veritable flight from Egypt. The first to leave were the fops and those civilians whom no duty or service kept in town. According to the reports of the guards at the city gates, over fifteen hundred private carriages are supposed to have left Moscow in one day. The price for hired horses is simply exorbitant: our neighbour paid 300 roubles for a *troika** which will only take him fifty versts from here. The Arkharoffs have left for the privince of Tamboff; the Apraxins for that of Orel, and the Tolstois for that of Simbirsk. The poor young pupils of the institute have been taken in carts to Kazan. They say that Yaroslav and Tamboff are so full of refugees that one can hardly find a vacant room. I have already told you that at the beginning of Lent, Ilya took Xenia and the child to grandmother's estate in the province of Tamboff.

"People say that even in the neighbourhood of Moscow there will be danger. The peasants are agitated, and, instead of looking after their master's possessions, they are pillaging, sacking and dividing among themselves whatever they can steal, and then seeking refuge in the woods. Recently, a band of drunken peasants met the carriage of Fanny Strieshneff, in which she and her children (you remember how you used to admire them on the boulevard) were leaving Moscow. The peasants surrounded the carriage and threatened and shouted at her: 'Where are you going masters? Have

*A carriage drawn by three horses.

you any worries? Don't you like Moscow? Get down from your carriage, you must become workers like ourselves.' Wasn't it horrible? But for the timely interference of a wounded colonel, whose orderlies happened to be there, and who commanded his soldiers to disperse the savage horde, God only knows how the matter would have ended. I told grandmother about it, gently of course. She was greatly frightened at first, then she had a Te Deum for the journey sung and subsequently gave orders for her sleeper to be prepared, but then she again postponed our departure, convinced that all the rumours of the enemy's approach were absurd. She still says, when speaking of our retreat: 'Nous reculons pour mieux sauter' (We retreat in order to jump forward the better.) She has not changed her manner of living. Recently I read to her a pamphlet written by Mme. de Stael. You know that she has arrived at Moscow where, to say the least, she was not expected. She spent an evening at our house and spoke with such spirit and fire that in spite of a violent headache, which her loud voice only increased, I could not leave the drawing room. She is delighted with Russia; she compares us to the works of Shakespeare, where everything that is not erroneous is sublime, and what is not sublime is erroneous.

"The boulevards are deserted now: only the inns are full. Last week at the Tardini and Renzel restaurant, some merchants boxed the ears of two civilians because the latter were speaking French. Another civilian, in his cups, was ill-treated because in speaking of Rostoptshin who had dismissed

the director of the post office, he exclaimed : ' That is right, one general exiles another general ! ' When grandmother heard of this, she went to sleep in the oratory and took some of her drops. And when I told her that, thanks to this monster of a Napoleon, our position is becoming desperate, she replied : ' Listen Aurora, I know Bonaparte, I have even met him at the house of Mme. de Rémusat and spoken to him ; I repeat that he is a man of destiny ; there you have his true definition. He is a great genius and not a brigand and a robber as that idol of yours, the prating Mme. de Stael, believes, and as Rostoptshin in his proclamations, would have it, although, mind you, I admit that both Rostoptshin and Mme. de Stael are people of the highest standing. But do you think that Napoleon at the summit of his glory, has brought half of Europe here to do harm to me, a poor old defenceless woman, who is moreover an acquaintance of his ? Kutuzoff too would not allow it. Besides, don't you see that I am ill ? Karl Ivanovitsh has just prescribed a new remedy for me and I must wait until it has taken effect. What would become of me in the country ? Who would attend to me in that desert ? I should never be able to get to such a distant place alive.' So you see, my well-beloved, that we are not leaving as yet. We pray, we make lint, we follow you with our thoughts. One word more : if I hear that your army corps is also retreating towards Moscow, I think that without asking any one's permission, I shall get on my horse and rush to meet you, and, if necessary, we shall die together for Holy Russia. Adieu,

adieu, when shall we meet again? Take care of yourself for your country's sake, and for that of Aurora who loves you."

On the Eve of Assumption, Vlass, the Princess's old chamber valet, and Maremiasha the housekeeper were chatting in the big yard by the furniture store room.

"The wrath of God is upon us," said Vlass through the door which the housekeeper was holding ajar. "Here we are, we have passed our lives in service and now suddenly, everything that we have saved threatens to float down the stream from us."

"Where have you been hiding?"

"I have been in the antechamber as usual. I have not yet packed up the laced red livery, nor the out-of-door furcoat."

"Serpent that you are! As long as you can stuff your nose with snuff, you are content. You wait until I tell the Princess; she will take her slipper from her little foot and box your ears; how would you like that?"

In the coach house, two masons had been working since the day before; under the supervision of Karpp the gatekeeper, they were secretly erecting a wall from floor to ceiling. Behind this wall, Maremiasha, with the help of some trustworthy people, was busy packing all the objects which could not be placed in the carts.

"Maremiasha Dmitrievna," begged Vlass, turning a parcel in his hands, "do not refuse me."

"Well, what is it you want?"

"I have prepared this for the day of my death:

a frock coat of half-cotton, a pair of new boots, a waistcoat and linen, everything that is required. . . ."

"What a nuisance you are! Do you want me to throw your rags over the trousseau of mademoiselle? . . . . Do you think that is why the wall has been raised.?"

"But if the demons arrive, they will pillage everything. Let me die as a Christian."

"Ah, you are always the same. In my opinion there is only one thing to be done: to burn everything that cannot be carried away so as not to leave anything for these cursed ones. Well, you old box, give me your parcel." And the housekeeper threw Vlass' parcel to the masons.

"And mine too, Maremianoushka, our light," sputtered Ermil, the octogenerian who lived among the servants, and had not left the stove for years.

"And ours too," cried the head chambermaids, Duniasha, Stesha and Lusha who came hurriedly up followed by Varlashka, a little baptised negro boy belonging to the personnel of the Princess.

"Have you ever seen such people? More of them. Well, where do you want me to store away all this? Well, well, give me your parcels, what can I do with you?" cried Maremiasha who had long ago hidden away safely all her own possessions. "Throw down your parcels yourselves and quickly. And you, my friends," she said to the two masons," close up this wall in such a way that it will not be noticed that it has only recently been erected. We shall place sacks of oats, hay and straw in front of it."

But this place of concealment was not roomy enough, so Maremiasha had a large hole dug in the garden behind the vegetable cellar. During the night, the gatekeeper, tall, bent and very pale, and the gardener brought a quantity of things belonging to the masters and the servants and hid them in it; then the hole was covered up with boards cleverly hidden beneath earth and turf. The gardener received instructions that he should carefully water and tend the grass turf that it should not dry up.

The last letter that Aurora had received from Perovski was dated August 20th; it had been written in the bivouac, under the walls of the Kolotsky convent, and was brought to Moscow by an aide-de-camp of Kutuzoff, who came with the object of urging the hasty dispatch of surgeons to the battlefield. Basil wrote that at last the army had received orders to take up their positions before Mojaisk; the troops were well pleased, as they hoped that a decisive battle would be the result.—

"But be prepared to hear some sad news which has greatly upset me. Poor Mitia has been severely wounded in the leg by a shell splinter: it happened during the encounter which took place near the river Osma; he has been taken to Moscow by a surgeon in the open carriage of Prince Tenisheff who has also been wounded. Tell Ilya of this and go and meet him. Tell Karl Ivanovitsh also of this, if he has not been sent away with the other doctors. Friend of my soul, joy of my life, shall we meet again? Shall we see our Mitia again in

this world? To think of that boy, so strong, so young! It is the beginning; may God keep you; May He keep us all."

The letter did not find Aurora at Moscow: she had already left for Lyubanovo with Ilya; Varlashka, the negro boy, presented the letter on a silver tray to the Princess. "Holy mother of God! The French are at Mojaisk," cried Anna Arcadievna, perusing the letter. It dropped from her hands together with her glasses, "and she, madcap, she is but two steps from the enemy at Lyubanovo! And Mitia wounded! Maremiasha! Vlass! Where are my glasses? Call the coachman, quick, hurry, save, save madeoiselle! They will make her a prisoner!"

XI

A WEEK after the Assumption, Arina, the old nurse, and her grand-daughter, Fenia, were seated on the steps of Oussoff's house at Novoselovka. Klimm, the starosta, and a few peasants, old and young, were also there seated on the steps ; they were discussing the alarming rumours spread throughout the country, and talking of the battles that had already taken place, and of the possible arrival of the enemy at Novoselovka.

" A man, who had just arrived from Viazma said that one could distinctly hear the cannon there."

" The old master is beyond the Volga. What shall we do in his absence ? " asked the peasants. " How shall we save his possessions and ours ? "

" Where can we hide ? " said someone.

" The Tatarinoff peasants took refuge in the forest, behind Mojaisk, but even there they were robbed."

" We must wait ; we cannot do anything without the authorities," declared Klimm.

Arina had already stored away all the most valuable possessions in the granary and in the furniture store-room. Many things which she had not yet had time to hide were lying about scattered in the grass. It had grown dark but the moon had not yet risen.

"Listen, *baboushka** Yefimovna," said a little bald-headed moujik named Korney. He looked rather pitiful of aspect but was very vivacious in manner and stopped to cough before continuing his speech. "You must not be offended at what I am going to say." This Korney had seen the world for he had not only been to Moscow but to Kazan and even to St. Petersbnrg.

"Speak" said the old woman with an air of importance "if what you have to say is worth listening to."

"They say," continued Korney "that this Bonaparte is only Bonaparte in name; that in reality he is an unknown son of the late Empress Catherine who, on her deathbed, left half of the Empire to him and that he has now come to claim his half from his brother Paul that is the father of the Emperor."

"Don't talk rubbish" snapped the starosta Klimm. "They lie, those sons of a dog."

"It is true, uncle, the *boyars*† have been hiding him in foreign lands and have only now produced him."

"Don't tell such lies" retorted Klimm severely, as he caressed his long beard and cast a look of meaning at Arina.

"Why has he now been set free?" asked Yefimovna, anxiously.

'"Give me back my half of the Empire and keep the other half,'" continued Korney. "'I shall give the land to the peasants with all that the seigneurs possess.' Thus we shall be subjects

* Little grandmother. † Boyarins or nobles.

not of the Tsar but of Bonaparte. Well, that is what people are saying."

"Karnioushka,‡ I warn you that you will get your account when the *ispravnik** comes. I shall tell him what you have been saying," replied Arina, rising and draping herself majestically in her shawl.

"He will come when he is least expected, and will cry: 'Where are the subjects of Bonaparte? Bring them hither,' and you will be brought the first, and you will have to answer."

The peasants were scratching their ears. One could hear sighs and a shuffling of worn-out *laptis*† on the steps of the *perron*.‡

"Wait, wait, uncle," cried a voice. "Baboushka, listen a minute."

"I hear wheels rolling; it is something coming from the mill. I should say a carriage."

Everybody listened in silence. The rolling became more distinct; no doubt it was a carriage approaching.

"Fenia, quick, a candle," cried Arina, rushing into the house. "Klimm Potapovitsh, open the gate. That is he, it is our ispravnik. It is a cart, no, it is his gig."

When Yefimovna and Fenia returned to the steps, a hooded, dust-covered cabriolet was standing before the door. The peasants, bare-headed, and keeping a respectful silence, were surrounding a young man, very pale, and lying very still upon the straw. Klimm was weeping and kissing a

‡ Dim. of Korney. * Official. † Bastshoes.
‡ Flight of steps to door.

hand hanging out of the cabriolet. Arina brought her candle near the face of the new-comer.

"Mitinka, my child!" she cried.

"You have recognised me, my dear," said a voice, weak and feeble as that of a child. "Here I am, I have come home, God be thanked for it. How I have trembled lest I should not be able to reach home. Give me a little water, some tea! Thirst is tormenting me."

The peasants, having deliberated in whispers with Klimm, with a thousand precautions, transported the wounded man into the house. The one who gave himself the greatest pains, who was more concerned than anyone about the young master, was just bald-headed Korney, he who had been speaking of Bonaparte.

"Well, there is Dimitri Nicolaevitsh! One might think that he had been crucified," said the peasants, drying their eyes.

"We had two wounded," said the assistant surgeon to Klimm, "Lieutenant-Colonel Prince Tenisheff, and your master. At first we used the open carriage of the Prince."

"But where is the Prince?"

"We left him at Gjatsk. He is dead. Your master does not know about it as yet; he believes that we left him at the hospital. The carriage broke down, and with much difficulty we persuaded this waggoner to bring us here."

"Will our angel live?" asked Yefimovna, hesitatingly. "So young, so handsome, the child that I have brought up. Oh, what a misfortune! Why have they so mutilated my child?"

"He will live," replied the surgeon, somewhat restlessly, looking away, his eyes all reddened by dust and sleeplessness. "It is an ugly wound, but God will help us. If only we could get to Moscow. There we should find a hospital and doctors."

Arina raised her eyes to the holy image suspended in a corner of the room, made the sign of the cross, turned up her sleeves, and, assisted by the other women, set to work. The rooms were lit up; the *samavar** sang in the dining room. She produced a feather bed, placed a mountain of cushions upon the bed of the late mistress of the house, and the whole was then transported into the drawing room, which was well aired and perfumed with fumigated rosin. Mitia was brought in and placed upon the bed. The assistant surgeon washed the horrible, gaping wound, dressed it and bound up his patient in some linen, exhaling the perfume of tansy and mint. During these preparations, Mitia was feverish and slightly delirious. However, when he had eagerly drunk two cups of perfumed tea, mixed with some of his favourite barberry jam, which his breathless and panting nurse brought him, his eyes brightened, and a smile, denoting a feeling of well-being, illuminated his face. He signed that all should leave him, with the exception of his old nurse.

"Ah," he said, seizing her rough hand, and kissing it, "fumigating rosin, tanesie, barberry, at last I am in my own nest. My God, how afraid I have been and how happy I am now. I shall live, I shall live, but where is Basil Perovski?"

* Tea urn.

"He is at the war where you have come from," said Arina, still contemplating her beloved child. "Two months have passed since you left us, and we knew nothing of what was happening to you. May the Holy Mother of God protect you."

"What? Two months? But it seems to me as if it were only yesterday!" He closed his eyes and remained silent for a time. "Give me some more tea, my dear nurse. . . . And our plans for the autumn with Perovski, when we hoped to live here happily together. . . ." he continued, looking around him. "This is mamma's bed. How well you have arranged everything. And where is papa? I shall not see him again. . . . Where is Ilya; where is Aurora, the fiancée of Perovski?"

"The master is at Saratoff, and Ilya Borissovitsh they say is at Moscow; they say that he is coming to Lyubanovo and that Aurora Valerovna is coming with him. Xenia Valerovna is at Panshino with her child."

"My dear nurse send someone at once to Lyubanovo, it is not far. Ah, if I could only see her. My father is away. I should have asked her blessing; it helps. She is so pious, so good! I must tell you, nurse, I confess to you, I loved her long before Perovski loved her!"

"What are you saying, my child, may God protect you! What ideas!" cried Arina, making the sign of the cross. "As for sending to Lyubanovo, that can easily be done." She left off wiping her eyes and called Frolka who mounted a horse and rode away at once.

" Take care of the ravines," cried Korney, " it is dark and the horse belongs to the master."

Mitia having drunk his tea, fell into a peaceful sleep and Yefimovna spent the night beside his bed. Towards dawn, the patient became restless.

" What is it you want, Mitinka, are you not comfortable ? "

" A la batterie ! Take better aim ! They are coming," he cried in his delirium. " Do you see them with the horsetails on their helmets ? "

The nurse made the sign of the cross over him and touched his forehead, it was burning. After the battles, he saw a spring evening. He was galloping by the side of Aurora, he tried to kiss her but she always evaded him.

" Aurora, Aurora, it is I, look at me," he murmured.

Yefimovna was frightened and went to wake the assistant surgeon who was sleeping in an adjacent room.

" What is coming over him ? " asked the poor woman, contemplating the purple spots which were gradually covering the face of the patient.

On tiptoe, the surgeon approached the patient, looked at him and then making a gesture, said : " It is nothing. Leave him with me. I will watch beside him.

Calmed, Yefimovna made the sign of the cross over the head of Dimitry and left the room. Day broke, Frolka returned from Lyubanvo ; they were expecting Ilya Borissovitsh and Aurora to arrive the next day. Arina promised herself that she would tell Mitia as soon is he woke up.

"Let him sleep, the poor child. Sleep will do him good; then he will take some tea, will have a little food and then, please God, they will arrive from Lyubanovo." Worn out, the poor old woman fell asleep in the hall. She woke up late the next morning. She was very surprised to see that the assistant surgeon was not with the patient, despite his promise to remain beside him. Day was peering through the window panes. The lint and all the materials for dressing the wound had not been touched. His forehead pressed against the window pane, the assistant surgeon seemed to be looking out into the yard very attentively.

"That is strange," thought Arina, "one might imagine that he was crying. Has he been drinking so early?" She looked towards the sideboard where the spirits were kept; it was locked. Pensively she walked towards the drawing room.

"Don't go," murmured the young man, "or no, you may go, it is all the same now."

Seized by a sudden terrible fear, Arina entered the room. Mitia was lying on his bed, his blonde head reposing on his arm, his mouth seemed to be smiling under his dawning moustache; his blue eyes, half open, gazed fixedly straight in front of him as if they saw joys unknown to mortal eyes. Loud sobbings and lamentations filled the room, Dimitry Oussof was dead.

In the room still permeated by the odour of fumigating rosin, on the very table where yesterday the *samovar* had sung its hospitable song, the dead was placed, arrayed in his uniform. In the coach house, the carpenter was busy finishing the

coffin. Any moment the priest was expected, he who had baptised Mitia; he was coming from Borodino. When the coffin was finished, Mitia was placed in it, and the candles were lit, and Yefimovna at the head of the other peasants knelt round it sobbing and praying. The sun filled the room with its shafts of golden light, and cast its rays upon the dark and red heads of the fervently praying peasants.

"My young falcon," thought Arina, "you have hardly lived and yet already, the grave is being dug for you in the very garden of your paternal home where you used to run about as a little child; it is being dug on high ground, so that your tomb will be visible for many miles around."

The waggoner hired at Moscow, was hastily repairing his cart, for the assistant surgeon was anxious to get back to his post near the convent of Kolotsky.

The priest arrived. He was reciting the prayers for the dead when suddenly, behind the mill, iron lances glittered; a detachment of cavalry was approaching.

"The French!" cried a voice in the yard.

Everyone became greatly excited and someone rushed into the house to tell the housekeeper. The peasants, grouped on the steps, saw a few Cossacks approaching, headed by a portly officer of sapeurs; he had a long moustache and slightly greyed hair.

"Who is the master here" he asked the peasants, "tell him of our arrival."

"The old master is beyond the Volga, your

Excellency, and the young master was brought back wounded last night, but he died this morning," replied Klimm with a respectful salute. "They are just reciting the prayers for the dead."

The officer bared his head and piously made the sign of the cross.

"See, he is making the sign of the cross, he is not a Frenchman, he is of our own religion," said the peasants.

The officer dismounted and followed by a sergeant of the Cossacks, signed to Klimm to come near.

"You are the starosta?"

"Yes, replied Klimm proudly.

"Very well, starosta, listen to my orders," said the officer in a low voice. "Very soon, perhaps to-morrow, our army will concentrate itself in this neighbourhood; a great battle will be fought."

Klimm turned pale and drooped his head.

"The house of your master, with all its dependencies, would be in the way. Orders have been given to raze it to the ground. Listen to me attentively and see that this is done to-day. You understand me. . . . orders have been given. A battery will be placed upon this elevation, perhaps a redoubt; the house would be under fire and in the way; you understand me?"

"In the way, under cannon fire," repeated the astounded Klimm, shuffling from one foot to the other. "But how are we to move all these buildings, and how are we going to do it?"

"You will see how it is done," said the sapeur, frowning heavily.

" And our poor huts ? What shall we do ? It means ruin."

" Your huts are situated at the foot of the hill. We shall see, perhaps they may remain where they are."

" And the dead ? " asked Klimm.

" Bury him as quickly as possible."

" Night is approaching," said the officer turning away, " but above all, send away the women, there should be as little noise as possible."

Klimm transmitted the order to Arina. The poor woman, overwhelmed by her grief, was stunned.

" *Batyoushka* "* she cried, falling on her knees before the officer, " do not ruin us. The master's house is in my charge. The brigands will soon retire from here. Where can I take all the possessions of my master ? where hide all these things garnered by the fathers, grandfathers and ancestors. So much work, so many privations, all for nothing ! "

The officer, greatly annoyed, pulled his moustache then he called the priest and the assistant surgeon into a corner and talked to them for some time, frowning heavily the while and casting irate glances about him, and then went away.

The priest ordered the candles to be relit, the deacon put on his sacerdotal garments, and the ceremony proceeded. The coffin was carried to the grave and speedily lowered to its resting place. Whilst the grave was being filled, the horses were put to the carriage and the dismayed Arina lifted into it. Fenia and the assistant surgeon sat down

* Little father.

beside her, and the carriage started for Lyubanovo. Night fell.

"This is the best thing for you to do," said the young surgeon, "I will accompany you as far as Lyubanovo and there you will be looked after. They say that the village is out of the range of the cannon and is, therefore, quite safe."

"Burn, burn, my friends, if such be the will of God, but it is not only the property of the Oussoff's that will perish; misfortune and death await all of us!" muttered Arina.

When the carriage and the cart had disappeared the officer cried in a tone that brooked no contradiction: "Now, you starosta and you others, set to work quickly. Take away all the valuables belonging to your masters, as well as your own and hide them as best you can. The utmost time I can give you for this work is an hour. Then gather straw and fire the house."

"What is this, my God," cried a voice in the crowd. "They were talking of the enemy but these are our own people!"

"What's that? Rebellion?" thundered the officer, "Take care of the gallows, my men."

"Larionoff, seize him, garrot him."

The Cossacks and the sapeurs dispersed in every direction. The moujiks, mad with fright, rushed about, carrying away any object that they could lay their hands upon. The fire crackled. A Cossack had run up to the haystack with a blazing straw torch. The farm was already ablaze and the smoke spread over the hill; the women and children cried and lamented.

Night had now fallen. A light closed vehicle was rolling rapidly over the wooded slope leading from Lyubanovo to Novoselovka; inside were two people; they were Ilya Tropinin and Aurora; both were silent. The deepening shadows prevented them from seeing clearly what skirted the road and so, without noticing them, they passed several Cossacks who were beating the bushes. Ilya was thinking of the wounded Mitia from whom only about three versts separated him, whilst Aurora was saying to herself: "If Mitia is wounded, what will happen to Basil? He was so anxious to fight and the war has but just begun!"

"What is the matter? The sky seems all red over yonder?" cried Aurora, suddenly.

Ilya looked out of the carriage. "Yes, it looks like a fire. Driver, can you see where the fire is? Can it by any chance be at Novoselovka?"

"That is just where it is sir."

"I dare say the women were anxious to have some fresh bread and did not know how to look after the barns."

The vehicle emerged from the wood and the view became clearer. The blazing buildings, on one of the elevated pieces of ground, spread a red glare for a considerable distance. The mill with its wings, which were only now catching fire, looked black in the midst of the whirling red sparks. A swarm of frightened pigeons were fluttering over it.

Wheels could be heard coming from the valley; soon a carriage appeared between the bushes. "Oh, my falcon!" a voice sighed. "Oh, my

falcon, our own people, it is the end of the world ! " It was Yefimovna with Fenia and the surgeon. All stopped. Hurried questions were asked. Ilya, dumbfounded, could hardly stand. His young favourite, his child almost, his pupil, his brother by baptism, had been carried off by death. He sobbed bitterly, alternately crossing himself and cursing the French.

" That's what it is, this is war," he said, clenching his fists, " civilised legal brigandage ! "

Aurora made Arina enter her vehicle, and Fenia got on the box beside the driver, whilst the surgeon seated himself as best he could. Aurora cast a last glance at Novoselovka in flames.

" Implaceble fatality ! " she thought with a shudder. " The laws of war. What will be the expiation for the death of this brave, this excellent Mitia, upon whose fresh grave this red light is being shed ? Curse upon him who has brought about this war. Will not a new courageous avenger arise for him as for Marat, another Charlotte Corday ? "

The carriage started, returning the way it had come. During the night, the entire Russian army advanced from both sides of the old Smolensk road and immediately took up their positions. Paying any price asked for horses, Ilya, accompanied by Aurora, Yefimovna, Fenia and the surgeon, arrived at Moscow towards noon. He told the Princess that there was not a moment to be lost ; she must leave at once ; they had heard the cannon booming already at Mojaisk. Nevertheless Anna Arcadievna still wanted to postpone her departure.

"Very well," she said, "then they will be beaten, these Frenchmen, we shall drive them out."

Ilya lost all patience. "It is more than imprudence!" he cried. "I beg of you grandmother, leave here at once, otherwise it will be too late. They will make you a prisoner, will rob you, frighten you, kill you."

"Oh, my dear," retorted the Princess Sheleshpanskaya, "what! make a prisoner of an old woman like me? Well then, my dear, send for a priest, let him sing a Te Deum. Yes, and we cannot leave without first consulting my doctor. Send for Karl Ivanovitsh; anything may happen on the journey, a thunderstorm may come up."

"What thunderstorm is to be feared at the end of August, grandmother?" asked Aurora.

"That is not your business; there are thunderstorms even in September. As for you, Ilyoushka, go quickly to Rostoptshin, and ask him whether such things as those which have just occurred at Novoselovka are permissible, even in war time. I shall write to the Emperor, he knew my husband and will remember him very well. Kutuzoff will have to answer for everything."

XII

On the evening of the 25th of August, on the eve of the battle of Borodino, the headquarters of Prince Kutuzoff were at the farm of Mikhailovski, near the village of Tatarinovo, the property of the Astafiefs, situated about four versts from Borodino. The old fieldmarshal was lodged in the manor, a one storeyed, small, but commodious house. The river Stonetz, falling into the river Kolotsha, separated Tatarinovo and the farm from the wooded elevation upon which Miloradovitsh, commanding the right wing of the army, had disposed his corps for the morrow's battle. In the twilight, one could just distinguish from here, to the left of the stream near the village of Gorki, the batteries protected by retrenchments ; a little farther one could see the white tents of the infantry, the chasseurs and the artillery of Bagowouth ; a little farther still, behind a wood of birch trees, rose the smoke from the bivouacs of Ouvaroff's dragoons and lancers, which constituted the reserves and were masked by the slopes of the Moskva. In a straight line from Tatarinovo, on a hillock about half a verst from the stream, one could see the horses and even hear the voices of Platoff's Cossacks. The weather was calm, damp and fresh ; the sun had just set but night

had not yet fallen. Since joining the army led by Barclay, Perovski had been attached to the general staff of Bagowouth; accompanied by several officers and a surgeon, he had just returned from the bivouac at Gorki and was pacing up and down in front of the *izba** where Miloradovitsh was sitting in council with Ouvaroff and Bagowouth. Cossacks were holding the saddled horses of the generals and other officers, ceaselessly watching the door and windows of the izba. Perovski attentively scanned the blue lines of the elevations beyond Kolotsha through a telescope.

"At last, we are settled and solidly encamped, it seems," said an old officer, a tall and dried-up man. "Do you think we have finished retreating now?"

"God only knows," replied his young colleague.

"Surely," rejoined the former, "but don't you know that the Prince is determined to wage a decisive battle?"

"Well," asked the young officer who had but recently joined the general staff, "and what do you think about it?"

"We shall do our duty," gravely answered the other, gazing in front of him. "What does it matter to me! I have been greatly worried about my family, but now that I know that my wife is in safety, it is all the same to me. Fancy, she writes to me from Tver and tells me that the pilgrims declare we shall have peace on St. Michael's day, the name day of the Prince. . . ."

"Peace will surely come one day," rang out the

* Peasant's hut.

musical voice of the doctor, a handsome middle-aged man, "in the meantime, however, many brave men will disappear from the ranks tomorrow."

"It is the will of God," said an elderly officer in a low voice, "the wings of death are fluttering, but as Fingal said, they do not reach everyone."

"What is really unfortunate," continued the doctor, "is the fact that such disorder reigns everywhere. The cannon are already thundering, but we have neither pickaxes nor shovels; half of our soldiers have nothing to do, and we lack lint and bandages for the hospitals. The tents are full of holes, and the patients are lying on damp ground, though the nights are rather cold now. I shall have to speak to the general again."

The old officer shook his head discontentedly. He was an educated but modest man, not unaware of the general disorder, but bearing patiently with it. He also knew that Dr. Mirtoff, who was somewhat of a fop and fond of his own comfort, managed on all his marches to carry amongst his luggage, a small, perfectly appointed tent, in which one could find a feather bed covered with an embroidered quilt.

"Why are you so attentively scanning the river?" asked the officer, turning to Perovski; "are the French moving?"

"No, everything is quiet over there. I am looking for the house of some friends; it used to be to the right of Borodino. . . . it is barely three months since I left there, on my way to rejoin the army. I cannot locate it; it is rather strange. And yet I can clearly see the village that belongs to it;

it lies at the foot of the hill. But I can find no trace of the house or the buildings surrounding them."

"It will have been removed; this hill is under the fire of our batteries. A portion of Semionovka, at the back of us, has also been demolished. Take my telescope, it comes from Vienna, from Corte. You can see everything through it as if it were on the palm of your hand."

Perovski looked through the telescope offered him. Before his dazzled eyes, passed, as in a mist, the vague outlines of the ravines and forest trees but still he could not see the house.

At this moment the door of the izba opened and the elegant silhouette of Ouvaroff was outlined; behind him appeared the red whiskers and speckled countenance of Bagowouth. The doctor approached them and informed the latter of the requirements for the ambulances. Bagowouth listened silently and then, turning to Ouvaroff, said in French: "You see, it is always the same thing, no remedies for the ill and wounded!"

He scribbled a few words on a page torn from an agenda, folded it and then let his tired eyes rest upon the officers surrounding him.

"Sintianin," he said, turning to an officer no longer young, "take this to Count Benigsen, if he does not write an answer, bring me his verbal reply."

Sintianin took his telescope from Perovski, replaced it in its leather case, jumped on his horse and doubled up over its back, rode away in the direction of the road at the back of the Stonetz.

Ouvaroff and Bagowouth returned to the bivouac ; Perovski and the Doctor following after the latter.

Night had fallen. A narrow path descending from Gorki through a coppice of birch trees wound a little round the mountain and then through a wooded ravine. The riders slowly passed the coppice and on reaching the ravine, saw their bivouacs. Perovski was thinking of Mitia Oussoff, of the latter's severe wound, of their recent plans to be married this very month of August, and of the morrow's battle.

" Tell me," said Dr. Mirtoff, " are you afraid of death ? Do you ever think of it ? "

" Afraid ? no, but I often think of it ; at this very moment, I admit I have been thinking of it."

" And yet you at once accepted the challenge of that Frenchman the other day at the relay station of Mojaisk ! Would you like to hear my views on the subject of death ? " continued the doctor in his agreeable and calm voice. " Ordinarily death comes as an unpleasant surprise, but when it comes unexpectedly, as the result of a wound in the head or in the heart, there is no reason to be afraid of it. A bullet whistles ; you have no time to think ; it is an unexpected issue and that is all ; Mirtoff was alive, Mirtoff is no more." The doctor laughed. " Arm yourself with patience," he continued ; ' a hideous death does not come from a bullet or from a shell but grips you on the hospital bed where everything is torment, sleeplessness, delirium, terror of waiting. We doctors who know and understand all this find this death painful and ugly."

Thus discussing, they reached the outskirts of the forest and the boundary of the camp.

"This is certainly not a moment to think of anything else," said Basil, lowering his head so as to protect himself as best he could against the branches of the birch trees grazing his face in the dark.

"As for myself," said the doctor, "I have a strange presentiment of what is going to happen to me. I am convinced that I shall die twenty years from to-day and where? At the English club in Moscow, after partaking of a good dinner for I am fond of dining well, and then, crack! It is all over. Little stars dazzle before your eyes and then comes an agreeable mist. What is it? Then, then there is nothingness: Mirtoff existed, Mirtoff exists no more. And now, come into my tent and make yourself comfortable. Take off your cloak and snatch a little sleep. I have my travelling tea urn, some excellent rum and I shall prepare you some punch: one does not refuse it on the eve of a battle."

"Thanks," said Perovski, "I am due at the general's, and I am afraid that he will not dismiss me very soon."

"Another word," said the doctor, "did you notice Major Sintianin? Guess at the idea I have in my mind?"

"I cannot guess."

"You noticed how preoccupied and sad he seemed. Well, I think that to-morrow he will go ahead of both of us. There will be no Sintianin any more," said the doctor, jokingly before he said good-bye.

It was past mid-night when Perovski reached his tent among the general staff. He found his orderly and gave him instructions to have his horse ready for him a little earlier than usual and then stretched himself upon a truss of hay without, however, being able to sleep. The camp was awake. The soldiers had cleaned their weapons brushed their uniforms, and said their prayers. Then they sat round the extinguished fires to prepare their knapsacks. Here and there a few words were exchanged in low voices. Some scanned the horizon to see whether dawn would soon break.

Through an aperture in his tent, Perovski perceived a corner of a starless sky, and a little farther, beyond the river, the enemy's camp, to judge by the line of lights of their bivouac, stretched over several versts. Separated by a distance of but two or three versts, one hundred thousand Russians on the one side, and an equal number of Frenchmen on the other, waited in tense expectation for the morning. Thousands of mouths ready to vomit and spit fire were soon to cover the valley with bullets and grapeshot. What had brought these armies opposite each other? Vainly endeavouring to find a solution of this enigma, Basil fell into a deep sleep.

It was six o'clock when the first French cannon boomed in the morning mist; from both camps hundreds of others at once replied. Perovski rushed out of his tent. For the first few seconds, he could hardly grasp the meaning of the scene unfolding itself before his eyes. Bagowouth's army corps was drawing itself up in battle array:

between the lines aides-de-camp were galloping. Jumping upon his horse, Perovski hurried away.

Lower down, to the left, shots were cracking; a Russian infantry column was advancing at a run while over and above this column a Russian battery, stationed near Gorki, was firing incessantly in the direction of Kolotsha. Bagowouth, mounted upon a magnificent white horse, and holding himself very stiffly, was in front of his men watching the opposite bank of the river through his telescope. Near the farm of Mikhailovski, a column of dust could be distinguished: there, surrounded by his suite, the fieldmarshal, Prince Kutuzuff, mounted on a small bay horse, was galloping. The first half of this memorable day of Borodino had passed.

On the eve of that day, Napoleon had issued a proclamation appealing to his kings, generals and soldiers; at dawn, he attacked with his full force the centre and left wing of the Russians, and now he was squeezing and harassing the detachments led by Barclay and Bagration. Fresh Russian regiments took the places of those that were destroyed. Davout, Ney and Murat attacked the vanguards of Bagration and the heights of Semenovski, which changed hands several times. After a bloody battle, the viceroy, at the head of his troops, took the battery of Raievski, and the French flag was unfurled there before the eyes of the terrified Russians. The Russian lines were broken. Kutuzuff was told of this disaster: he and Benigsen were stationed not far from that izba where the evening before he had held council with Milora-

dovitsh; the fieldmarshal immediately sent Yermoloff, chief of the general staff of the first army, and the battery was retaken. At the same moment, Bagowouth received orders to execute a flank movement so as to disengage the left wing. Bagration led his columns along a cross-road by the Khoromovski River between the farm Mikhailovski and Kniazkovo. The French bullets whistled above the heads of the detachment and fell into the wood. Bagowouth hastily despatched Perovski with instructions to transfer the ambulances a little farther away towards the farm Mikhailovski and Tatarinovo. Perovski galloped away from the Khoromovski hollow over the open slope. The thunder of an infernal cannonade boomed in his ears; more than once he heard a bullet whiz over his head and thought that the next would certainly kill him. "Perovski existed, Perovski exists no more," he thought, as he nervously spurred on his horse. On the outskirts of the wood, he saw the first ambulance and gave instructions for it to be moved a little farther back. Instead of continuing on his way, he looked around for someone from whom he could inquire where Dr. Hirschfeld was to be found. At the entrance of one of the tents used for surgical operations, he saw Mirtoff, exhausted with fatigue, covered in sweat, his apron blood-stained, but still in good humour. The doctor had evidently just performed a difficult operation and had come out to smoke a cigarette and take a breath of fresh air.

"You want Hirschfeld?" he asked, recognising Perovski.

"Yes," replied Basil, reining in his horse. "Which way should I go?"

The doctor, still smoking, approached a fine bay horse standing in front of his tent; caressing the animal with one bloodstained hand, with the other he pointed out the path to the right.

"Happy journey," he said. "As far as we are concerned, don't worry. We are going to move; they are packing up now. This poor animal has just lost its master; we have extracted a shell splinter from his back, but he is lost. Ah, pardon, just one word more, tell Fedor Bogdanovitsh to send me the reserve instruments, I need them. Remember, years hence, we two shall meet at the English Club, unless the bullet of your Frenchman, Gerambeau, hits you."

"What coolness," thought Perovski, as he rode away amidst the noise of the cannonade, "to jest in the midst of this inferno!"

Suddenly something crashed at the outskirts of the wood, piercing the air with a sharp, whistling sound. In spite of himself, Perovski trembled, and nervously seized the neck of his horse; a terrible noise broke out near him, shouts of terror were heard. Basil turned round. A thick column of smoke, mixed with sand, was whirling at the very spot where but a few moments before the operating tent had stood; a big gaping hole, still smoking, was in its place. Doctor Mirtoff had disappeared. The big bay horse near the tent was writhing on the ground, contorted in agonising convulsions, and beating the air with its four hoofs, Crushed underneath the animal, something pitiful.

terrible to behold, was groaning miserably. Terrified soldiers, bruised and covered with earth, were hastening to lift up the horse and to disengage the man who was being crushed and choked under it. Perovski saw the soldiers, the linen clothes and the blood spurting out in a jet and jumped off his horse to help the soldiers support the upper part of the body of the wounded man. He recognised Mirtoff.

"My friends," murmured the doctor, in a choking voice, looking down with terrified, almost invisible eyes, upon the bleeding pieces of flesh which had been his legs, "my friends, quick, the apparatus. Yegoroff, the bandages, quick," and he fainted. Yegoroff, the assistant surgeon, sat down on the ground near him and with trembling hands began to close the opened arteries.

"Is he dead?" asked Perovski, bending down.

"Alas, no; the poor fellow will suffer greatly. As for living—impossible. A litter," he cried, turning to the soldiers.

Perovski galloped away to another ambulance.

The Raievski battery was again being attacked. Napoleon hurled against it his guards and reserves. Ouvaroff's attack upon the French left flank paralysed this movement, but fresh French troops continued to arrive until the battery was taken once more.

"Look, look," said someone to Perovski, pointing to the heights which Bogowouth's columns were attacking, "yonder is Napoleon."

Basil raised his telescope, and for the first time saw the Emperor. Mounted upon a white horse,

and followed by a suite of officers, he was riding towards the redoubt Raievski, now occupied by the French. Everyone expected an attack by the old French Guard, but Napoleon did not risk it.

Towards six o'clock in the evening the battle ceased. Woltzogen, the Emperor Alexander's aide-de-camp, arrived at Gorki and told Prince Kutuzuff that the enemy had captured all the principal Russian positions and that the troops had been defeated.

"It is false," cried the Prince, aloud, in the hearing of his suite. "The exact progress of the battle is known to me alone; the enemy is beaten on every point, and from to-morrow we shall drive him out of Holy Russia." Night had fallen. Kutuzuff took up his quarters at the farm Mikhailovski; the windows were again brilliantly lit and one could see the orderlies passing round and serving tea; towards midnight the commanders of the various detachments posted round the farm foregathered with the Prince. Bogowouth, too, was there with one or two young officers of his general staff. Cavalier guards kept watch over the yard and its dependencies. Aides-de-camp and orderly officers, standing near the perron, conversed with the new arrivals. A big fire had been lit in front of the house illuminating the old lime and birch trees in the yard, the orchard, the pond and the troika of the courier ready to leave. Perovski, standing near the perron, saw the pale and gloomy face of Count Thol slowly and nervously mounting the steps; he had returned from an inspection of the lines. Then appeared the

brown and curly head of Yermoloff, the hero of the day; he shouted through the window, calling for a courier as soon as Count Thol had finished delivering his report. A troika advanced, and an aged officer, carrying a leather case slung over his shoulders, descended the steps. Basil was happy to recognise Sintianin in this officer.

"Where are you going?" asked the others.

"To St. Petersburg; I am taking the report," answered Sintianin, making the sign of the cross. Afterwards they learned that as soon as he had heard Count Thol's report, Kutuzuff had given orders for the army immediately to retreat towards Moscow by way of Mojaisk. The next morning, Perovski received orders to rejoin General Miloradovitsh.

XIII

On the 31st of August, everything was at last ready for the departure of the Princess Anna Arcadievna. She was going to her estate Panshino in the province of Tamboff. The waggons, which were to precede her with all the domestics, were already waiting in the courtyard. The beautiful chambermaids, Sasha, Duniasha and Stesha, mounted, wrapped up in shawls and *Kazavaikas*,* upon the carts full of casks, poultry cages, crockery and feather beds. They were laughing and cracking nuts. The other maids, seven in number followed them. There were the laundresses, the lace-makers, embroiderers etc. The chef and his scullions hoisted *Yermil* the *gouslar*† upon a cart, whilst he himself, accompanied by his acolytes, was to follow the procession on foot. First came a long cart containing the Princess' buffetier, her confectioner and her hairdresser. Then came a waggon full of hay and oats to which Aurora's horse Barss was attached; to another waggon the Princess' favourite cow Molodka, of pure Kholmogori breed, and the old he-goat of the stables, were attached. Maremiasha, the housekeeper, had chosen for herself, Yefimovna and Fenia, a hood

* Large coloured handkerchiefs.
† Player on the *gousli* or dulcimer.

cabriolet drawn by three piebald horses. A featherbed, covered with a carpet was placed in it and respectfully and with many precautions, the negro boy Varlashka, wearing a red fez, placed on it the parrot's cage and basket containing the Princess' two lapdogs, Limka and Timka. They reposed upon eiderdown.

Maremiasha, who had superintended all the arrangements for the journey, bade good bye to the Princess and re-entered the house once more.

For the last time she inspected all the rooms, groaning and sighing the while, hurried the slackers without hurrying herself, and at last appeared upon the perron with several women, carrying vases of jasmin and geraniums. Everyone made the sign of the cross and towards noon, the carriages started, followed by a cart carrying a tent.

Aurora had left the house early in the morning on a visit to the Nikitski convent where she had prayers recited for the soul of Mitia. She was dressed in black and wore a white wrap over her head. Her eyes were tear-stained for she had cried a great deal. On her return she heard that the doctor was with her grandmother, so she went up to her own room to pack up a few odd things left about. She closed the cupboards, placed the keys on the table and grew pensive. "Shall I take the keys with me?—but how stupid I am," she thought, as she contemplated the paper and hay strewn all over the room. "If the enemy enter Moscow, the furniture will be broken and rough hands will handle all these dainty things." Mechanically she picked up a theatre programme,

perused it, and threw it away. It stated that quite recently at the grand theatre, an anacreontic ballet : " The Marriage of Zephir " had been given. The evening before, a drama " Nathalie, the daughter of the Brigand " had been played ; it was followed by a mascarade*. It also announced that in September the subscription list for a series of 200 performances would be opened.

" Theatres, performances," thought Aurora sighing deeply, " in times like these ! Have these people no hearts, no conscience ? "

A book of music, bound in red morocco and lying forgotten upon a table then caught her eye. She opened it and hid her tear-stained face in it. " Where are you at this moment, my dear absent one ? Do you see me ? What are you doing ? " she cried. Her thoughts dwelt upon her horse-back ride with her fiancé ; upon her last interview with Basil ; and then reverted to Novoselovka in flames, and to the cannonading under Mojaisk.

" How did it finish, that terrible battle ? Who had won the victory ? Who was still alive ? "

" Mademoiselle, her Excellency is waiting for you," said Vlass from the threshold of the room.

Aurora turned round and perceived that the old retainer was freshly shaven and arrayed in the crumpled livery which he had not worn for a long time ; its collar and bronze buttons were ornamented with the family crest. He looked tired and his face was flushed ; the preparations for the departure had put him in a bad humour as anyone could see from his arched, grey brows.

* Burlesque.

"All right, I am ready, my good man. I am coming down," replied the girl, closing the book of music. She seized a pen and hastily scribbled a few lines to be handed to the gatekeeper.

"If God keeps my Basil safe," she thought, "he will enter Moscow with the troops and his first thought will be to come here; it will be some consolation for him to receive these few lines." This is what she wrote:

"August 31st, 1812. My dear; We are leaving this very moment for Panshino. No doubt you have already heard of the death of Mitia; I have this morning prayed for the repose of his soul, and I have made a vow that if any sacrifices be required, I am ready to make them; you will see what a patriotic Russian woman is capable of when duty calls. Do not forget Aurora who loves you."

She descended the stairs, looked in the oratory of her grandmother, picked up a lace cap that had been prepared for the Princess and then forgotten, and slowly wended her way towards the Palm salon so memorable to her. Here perfect chaos and disorder reigned; the furniture had been removed and the pictures and mirrors taken down from the walls; in the dining room the chime of the clock forgotten among many other objects, began to play a tune by Neledinski, a friend of the house.

When I come to the river,
And see the water flow,
Carry away my grief. . .

Aurora was unable to restrain her tears and

rushed away. For the last time she looked up at the house that she was about to leave. On the perron, she saw the chief of police, who had come to bid " God speed " to the Princess, in spite of the fact that he was almost overwhelmed with work.

Tropinin, who had decided to stay in town until the departure of the Senate and all the employés of the theatrical administration, supported the weeping Aurora, and helped her take her seat in the dormeuse, * opposite her grandmother.

Anna Arcadievna said good-bye to the chief of police, and to two old praying sisters, who had hastily come to pay their respects. The Princess was annoyed ; she could not arrange her feet comfortably because of the numerous and varied parcels, not forgetting the basket containing Tutik, the Princess' third and favourite little dog, a fallow spaniel, who was never separated from his mistress. Tutik was wrapped up in a green silken coverlet, and had a rose bow on his little head.

" How tiresome you are!" said the Princess to her faithful chamber valet Vlass, " You are fussing about and behaving like a perfect madman without doing anything at all useful."

" And if your Excellency only knew how she wearies me ! " muttered Vlass who could no longer restrain himself as he closed the carriage door with a bang.

" You hear him ? " cried the old lady addressing Aurora, as if the latter were responsible for the impertinence of the servant. " There you have the fate of the Princesses Sheleshpanski. These

* Sleeping Carriage.

people will send me to my grave. Where are my drops ? "

" Move on," shouted Vlass to the coachmen, majestically seating himself on the box and casting a reproachful look at the two plaster lions that guarded the entrance of the house.

" The angels have left," said one of the praying sisters, bowing low to the carriage, and hiding the alms she had received ; " now we have only the heavenly queen to protect us."

Karpp, somewhat pale, threw an angry withering glance at the departing sisters and closed the principal gate with a clang. The roof of the big house with its terrace had already passed out of sight behind the other houses ; the heavy dormeuse of the Princess drawn by six horses, four in front, and two at the sides, one of them mounted by a small postilion, slowly passed through Bronnaja Street, crossed the Boulevard Tverskoi, and continued its route through the Kremlim towards the Rogojski Gate.

Tropinin, a cloak thrown over his uniform, accompanied the ladies in a hired droshki. On the other side of the Yaouza, the streets swarmed with people hurriedly leaving Moscow. The city was deserted after the terrible news of the battle of Borodino.

XIV

It was the second of September. Day and night thousands of carts moved along the Smolensk road carrying the Borodino wounded to Moscow, whilst numerous closed carriages, carts and vehicles of every description hurried in the direction of Vladimir, Ryazan and Tula, each striving to get ahead of the other. The last inhabitants were leaving the town. It was rumoured that after the battle the army started on a retreat towards Moscow, but everyone believed that a new battle, this time a decisive victory for the Russians, would take place at the gates of the city.

Perovski, and one or two other officers on the general staff, had already received instructions to draw up a map of the Vorobyevo Mountains; redoubts were even being erected, but after a Council held at the village of Filly, Kutuzuff decided to abandon Moscow without a battle. The troops marching from the Smolensk road towards that of Ryazan, passed through Moscow; the hostile army followed close upon their heels, and was rapidly advancing towards the Dorogomilovski Gate; one could even hear the fusilade between the French vanguards and the Cossacks and Lancers of the Russian rearguard.

The commander of the Russian rearguard, the

brave and intrepid Miloradovitsh, surnamed "The Winged," anxious to facilitate the retreat of the Russian army, and to give time to the luggage trains and to the remaining inhabitants of the town to retire, declared to Murat, King of Naples, who commanded the French vanguard and was as brave and intrepid a man as himself, that if the French did not stop their advance and wait, he would give battle with the bayonet and the knife in every street and in every house of Moscow. Murat therefore, verbally agreed to an armistice that should last until the evening. The firing ceased, and the French, though in sight of Moscow, suspended their attack. Perovski had come safely through the battle of Borodino, and with another young and handsome officer, a certain Kvashnin, was now in the army of Miloradovitsh. He was crazy with impatience to reach Moscow and learn the whereabouts of his fiancée, and the news of Mitia Oussoff, who had been sent to Moscow after the encounter at Osma. He still hoped to see Aurora. "Who knows," he thought, "perhaps the ladies may not have left the city yet." The night before at Filly, Basil had put on his last clean shirt with lace cuffs, a white piqué waistcoat, and then, freshly shaved, he mounted his grey horse ready to enter Moscow. An inexplicable depression however, agitated and even irritated him; everything looked black to him; he tormented himself with the thought that his servant, who had gone on ahead of him, would get drunk and lose his precious small box that contained all his dear souvenirs.

Kvashnin was in a better humour. He was a good comrade with a sympathetic nature. Like Perovski, he had followed his general to Filly, where the important war council was held. There, he had not only seen Kutuzuff and the principal generals and commanders of the army, but had also heard the most astonishing opinions expressed, not only on military but also on political questions and had learned much that later on was to become history.

"I think that Borodino will be known by the name of 'The Battle of the Giants,'" he said, his short, plump fingers, caressing his foam-white horse; "as for myself, I should rather baptise it: 'The Battle of the Six Michaels.'"

"But why that name?" asked Perovski, absent-mindedly, as through the lines of the dragoons in front of him, he caught sight of the silhouette of the Poklonnaya Hill, and endeavoured to place the slopes where, but a short time before, he had galloped with Aurora and Mitia Oussoff.

"Don't you know?" replied Kvashnin, happy that he could tell his serious comrade what he had learned. "Kutuzuff's name is Michael; Barclay's name is Michael, so is our Miloradovitsh's, and Vorontzoff and Borozdin are also named Michael. Then the French, too, have a Michael, Marshal Ney."

"That equals the Apollyon of the Apocalypse," replied Basil, drily.

"And do you know how many men we lost at Borodino," continued Kvashnin.

"It was an ocean of blood," said Basil, sighing

as he recalled the picture of the battle to his mind; "and yet you and I are safe; we have not even been wounded."

"Our turn will come. But listen. What I heard is extraordinary and fabulous. I heard Tunitin, the aide-de-camp of Yermoloff, say at headquarters that the battle had really only lasted about six hours, and yet during those six hours we lost in killed and wounded, fifty thousand men, while the French lost an equal number! Out of this hundred thousand men, it is reckoned that about forty thousand men were killed. Isn't it terrible? They say that taking the two armies, over fifty generals were killed or wounded; sixty thousand cannon balls were fired, and about one and a-half milliard gun shots, which makes over 50,000 shots to the second, therefore one shot out of every thirty was fatal. What do you think of that? When in history has such a massacre taken place and so much blood been shed? It is frightful!"

Basil listened with a shudder to Kvashnin's calculations. He remembered his former admiration for Napoleon and how, in imitation of his dreamy genius, he had once bought at Kaltshugin's a translation by Kostrovski of Ossian's poems, and had read them in his first bivouac. He also remembered his farewell to Mitia when the latter, seated in his cabriolet, looked through tear-dimmed eyes at his paternal home and from a distance blessed his old nurse, Arina, and Basil, and then shouted: "Until the autumn, remember, we shall marry then and be happy."

Kvashnin was still talking.

"Don't forget, mon cher," rejoined Basil, as if excusing himself. "Don't forget that if we have had losses, our enemies have lost twice as many men. And it is not an insignificant fact that Napoleon was very angry, as a prisoner told us at headquarters. He was furious to see our resistance, furious that we did not budge an inch but remained all night on the battlefield, still on the defensive. We have retreated, it is true, but also, we have not cried for mercy. He is supposed to have said to Ney: 'La fortune est une franche courtisane.' Now we shall see which way this courtesan, who has certainly spoiled him in the past, will turn."

Kvashnin was silent; he was busy endeavouring to engrave the words of Napoleon in his memory, that he might be able to repeat them to his mother when they met.

"They seem to be quite satisfied at headquarters," said Basil, in an irritated tone, "for they believe that once the French have entered Moscow, which we are going to abandon to them without a struggle, they will accept any conditions and will celebrate peace. Their *amour-propre* will be satisfied, and they will retire to Poland. I hope that nothing of the kind will happen; we cannot accept an humiliating peace." He spurred on his horse and rejoined Miloradovitsh. "Moscow," he thought, "is the end of Napoleon, the tomb of his fortunes and of his glory. I feel sure of it, and I pray God that I may not be mistaken."

The street through which the rear of the army

was passing was packed by carriages carrying the inhabitants leaving the city; excited pedestrians rushed about in the midst of the confusion. "They are coming, they are coming, the French are coming; they are already on the Vorobyevo Hill," people shouted on all sides. From the cross-roads, savage shouts could be heard. The populace was plundering the shops and public houses, now abandoned by their proprietors. The inhabitants, who had not been able to leave the city, either hid in cellars, or came out of their gates, carrying holy images, and saluted the passers-by, and inquired whether the Russians were victorious or still retreating.

Miloradovitsh had reached the Oustinski bridge on the other side of the Yaouza, and his columns were marching in front of him when a Cossack officer arrived with a report.

"Lieutenant Perovski, Ensign Kvashnin," called the general.

The young men approached.

"You are both of you Moscovites; do you know the city well?"

"Perfectly," both replied at once.

"Then you, Perovski, ride to the Le Fortovo Barrier, and you, Kvashnin, to that of Boutirski, and hurry on the slackers. General Sikorski seems to have lost his way and the Cossacks have remained behind. The armistice cannot last much longer, the enemy is already encircling us, and may cut off our retreat through Sokolniki or Le Fortovo. If you require anything, say so; our halting place will be at the Rogojskaja Barrier."

XV

The two officers, followed by a couple of Cossack orderlies, quickly crossed the bridge, and together passed through the Solianka. Although his horse was tired out, Kvashnin did not lag behind.

"Fate is against me," thought Basil; "had I been sent to the Boutirki Barrier, I should have passed the Patriarchal Ponds and if, as Aurora wrote me, the Princess has not yet left the town, I should perhaps have seen my fiancée at the window, or on the balcony. I should have told her to hasten their departure as the danger is momentarily increasing. But now I am sent in another direction. Suppose we exchanged."

"Well, comrade, au revoir," said Kvashnin at that moment; "here I go to the left and you to the right through the Pokrovka, and the Gorokhovoe. I know the part well for one of my uncles lives in German Street."

"Pardon," replied Perovski, very agitated," the minutes are precious, but just one word. My fiancée lives at Moscow in the Bronnaja Street, near the Patriarchal Ponds. On your way you will see a house with a green roof, and a terrace, and two lions in the front. If on your return from Dmitrovka or the Tver boulevard, it is not far. . ."

"At your service," said Kvashnin blushing and

casting a glance at his orderly, "Whose house is it?"

Perovski gave the name of the Princess. "I only ask you to tell the ladies how things are and, should they have already left the town, ask the gatekeeper Karpp, or anyone else you see, where the Princess and her grand-daughter have gone, and if everything is all right. But I fancy I heard you say that your mother lives at Moscow; if it is on my way, I should be happy to give a message for you."

"Certainly," exclaimed Kvashnin, pressing Basil's hand, "I am quite at your service. My mother must have already left Moscow, but should she happen to be still in town, we might go, and have tea with her and taste some of her home-brewed liquor, and what a liquor it is! How happy the old woman would be! She lives at the corner of the Klementievski square in the Piatnitzkaja, in the Clement quarter, you know, Clement the Pope. It is a house with a red roof and, if it has no terrace, it boasts of an entresol."

"Happy journey and good luck! Should you arrive before me at the luggage train, would you mind finding my servant? I am always afraid that he will lose my things."

Kvashnin succeeded in executing Miloradovitsh's, orders at the Boutirski Barrier, then passing through the Bronnaja, he stopped at the house of the Princess, where he learned that the family had left the town two days previously. As Karpp mentioned a note left behind by Aurora, he asked that it should be delivered to him. Then, quite happy at his

success, he galloped gaily away towards the Rogojski Barrier, but fell in with a French regiment, and was made a prisoner. When night fell, however, he managed to escape and safely reached the luggage train; he found Perovski's servant all right, but no one knew anything about the young officer or his fate.

After bidding good-bye to Kvashnin, Basil, followed by his Cossack, rode quickly through the Pokrovka to the Basmannaja. A regiment passing through the quarter of St. John, the Precursor, detained him; he transmitted the instructions to its Commandant, and then was again detained by infantry troops coming from the Gorokhovaja. He crossed through the lines of soldiers, all marching in sad silence, rode through an obscure side street, past some waste ground, and then found himself in a grove on the banks of the Tshetshora. He judged that by crossing the rivers Tshetshora and Yaouza, he would be able to reach Le Fortovo much quicker than through the Basmannaja street; here he met a luggage train, whose conductors were quarrelling with the chasseurs of Dimidoff, escorting a dozen carts laden with furniture and with greyhounds, other dogs and some horses attached behind. It was not until five o'clock that he succeeded in reaching the bridge at Le Fortovo, but here again, he met an obstacle; a belated column of cavalry was passing, hurrying and pushing their way along. They were dragoons and Cossacks.

"Where are you coming from?"

"From Sokolniki."

"Who is your divisional chief?"

" Major General Sikorski."

" Where is he ? "

The soldiers pointed to a wood beyond the bridge.

" Hurry boys, it is getting late," cried Basil, " we are meeting at the Rogojski Barrier. Hurry."

" *Radi staratsa !* (Happy to do our best.)," replied several voices, and the bridge resounded with the hurried tramping of the soldiers.

Perovski could pass through at last. The wood was much further than he had imagined ; the uneven, marshy path, softened by the recent heavy rains, led through numerous kitchen gardens. Night fell. Basil, surprised to find that it was so late, mopped his perspiring brow and spurred on his horse.

He had galloped at least a verst though the wood when, near a pond, he saw a military detachment drawn up in a column. In the twilight he saw that not only Russians, but also some French were there. He was still hesitating what to do when suddenly he saw General Sikorski seated beside a French general who, he afterwards learned, was General Sebastiani, the commander of the French rearguard. Telling his Cossack to remain behind, he rode up to General Sikorski, saluted, and gave him Miloradovitsh's instructions.

" What can I do, batyoushka ? " replied the portly but energetic general in a discontented voice. He looked worried, and his eyes were red. " God is my witness that we have lost no time ; we heard of the armistice like all the others, but there is an extra bridge over the Yaouza, and these

gentlemen," he pointed to the gloomy and silent Sebastiani, and his following," have cut off our last brigade, and have taken it into their heads not to let us pass ; we have, however, managed to come to an understanding. Tell his Excellency that we shall follow without delay."

Orders were given in French ; a regiment of Cossacks of the Don, and one of dragoons, passed between the lines of the French.

Perovski waited until they had passed, then he hurried to the outskirts of the wood where he had bade his Cossack wait for him, but the man was no longer there. He called him, but no answer came back. He could only hear the tramping of the Russian brigade marching towards the bridge. Basil turned in the same direction, but already the French had posted their guards between the wood and the bridge.

" Qui vive ? Who goes there ? " cried a sentry.

" A Russian officer," replied Perovski.

But the sentry would not let him pass, and the officer in charge of the pickets begged Basil to follow him to General Sebastiani, who authorised him to cross the French chain. He had barely passed it, however, when the general re-called him.

" The King of Naples is here," he said ; " you speak French, you are educated, he will be delighted to talk to you. Your cordon is just on the other side of the bridge, you can therefore, spend a little time here quite safely." Perovski followed him rather unwillingly. They went slowly, surrounded by aides-de-camp, passed the wood, and found

themselves in open fields, where fires blazed in the distance. Crossing a ditch, they soon found themselves in front of a big izba. A crowd of officers were stationed at the entrance, and soldiers carrying lighted torches, came to meet the little group.

XVI

SEBASTIANI dismounted, ordered that Perovski's horse should be taken care of, and then asked that officer to wait until he had seen Murat. Basil entered a feebly-lit room; he could hear all the outside noises; riders were perpetually coming and going. A tall Frenchman with a horsetail on his helmet came in, rummaged in a cupboard, evidently searching for something to eat, and then left the room swearing. Half-an-hour later, General Sebastiani returned.

"The King of Naples is busy; he cannot see you before to-morrow morning; you had better pass the night here."

"Impossible," cried Basil, losing all patience. "I am expected back: I brought orders, and now I must return quickly, in order to hand in my report. Please do not detain me."

"I understand, but the night is dark and our positions not being clearly defined, you could not, without great danger, reach your outposts."

"Am I then a prisoner?" inquired Basil, controlling his temper. "You, General, better than any one can settle the question. You saw that I had been sent to the general of the brigade which has just left."

"Calm yourself, young man," said Sebastiani

smiling, and sitting down on a stool. "I give you my word, the word of a soldier, that you will see the King of Naples early in the morning, and that you will then be taken back to your outposts. And now let us have something to eat and then rest."

An aide-de-camp brought in a sort of dusty leather scabbard in which was some food and a bottle of wine. He offered Perovski, who had not tasted anything since the morning, some white bread, cheese, and a glass of Sauterne.

"Moscow is deserted, abandoned by its inhabitants," said Sebastiani, munching his bread and cheese," are you aware of that?"

"It could not have been otherwise," replied Basil.

"But the Emperor will enter the Kremlin tomorrow; he will reside in the palace of your Tsars. You did not expect that."

"Our army still exists; it has not been defeated."

"Had your Emperor extended his hand to us, Napoleon and he would have been masters of the Universe. We would have proved it to perfidious Albion by attacking India. But it is time to sleep," added Sebastiani, seeing that Basil was silent, and had not touched the food offered to him.

Perovski was taken to another room full of officers of the general staff, all sleeping pell mell on the floor. He put his coat on the floor, placed his cap underneath his head and, without taking off his boots, lay down in a corner. By the light of the torches, still burning in the yard, he saw a remarkably good-looking French officer, with his

arm in a sling, and a bloodstained handkerchief round his head, seated by the window; he was talking to someone outside. Neither of the speakers paid any attention to the entrance of the Russian officer, but continued their conversation.

"I saw him one day in a consul's toga of red velvet and gold," said the voice of the man standing outside; he spoke in French but with a distinctly foreign accent. "How handsome he looked! Here he will appear in a new guise; no doubt, he will don the costume of the ancient Tsars."

"But shall we ever see our country again?" rejoined the wounded man in a very feeble voice.

"My father writes to me from Maçon that the taxes are becoming heavier every day, and that the people are being oppressed. They have taken my sister's last cow away from her, and my sister has six children!"

"He is a great man," replied the other; "he will not have said in vain that Russia must undergo her destiny. Remember my words; he will set the serfs free, will resuscitate Poland, will found the Duchies of Smolensk, Vilna and St. Petersburg; new Dukes and viceroys will be created, and he will distribute appanages to his generals and give the kingdom of Poland to his brother Jerome."

"And yet you are not even a general; your compatriots are brave, I do not deny, but Kutuzuff's army is not yet annihilated and fortune is blind."

"You are talking at random," retorted the other "you are forgetting the word of the new Cæsar: 'The bullet that will kill me has not yet been moulded;' "Le boulet qui me tuera n'est pas encore

fondu." The great man must go on living for a long time, yet ; live and fight for the oppressed and the downtrodden. Riga has been taken, and it is said that Macdonald has already reached the capital. Don't you believe it ? It is also said that several million false Russian banknotes are in circulation. If necessary, a new usurper will be produced ; the people are already whispering that the Emperor Paul is still alive."

The wounded man did not reply ; silence fell upon the room and outside the torches were extinguished.

" Can all that be true ? " Basil asked himself in the darkness. " Is it possible that a civilised people, that a man of genius, who so short a time ago was my idol—is it possible that they could go to such lengths ? No, it is not possible ! They are but the inventions of delirious brains, of people intoxicated with pride, and who are angry at their ill-luck at Borodino."

Perovski for a long time could not sleep ; it occurred to him to try and leave the izba and reach the wood. He got up, but he heard the " Qui vive " of the sentry and realized the utter uselessness of such an attempt. He lay down again and, at last, fell asleep. At dawn, the beating of the drum awoke everyone. The day promised to be mild and warm.

Sebastiani kept his word, and sent one of his aides-de-camp to accompany Perovski to Murat. The King of Naples had passed the night at Moscow. Perovski and his companion wended their steps towards the Zamoskvarietshe where Murat was lodged ; it was near the church of St. Clement.

Basil looked around and discovered the house with the green shutters that belonged to Kvashnin's mother; French soldiers carrying furniture and other objects were just then emerging from the gates. Through the windows he could see others, their faces flushed and excited, walking through the rooms, their helmets on their heads, and their uniforms in disorder.

"Is it possible that this is pillage? Poor Kvashnin!" thought Perovski. He saw a small, thickly built infantry soldier, bow-legged and with a nose like an eagle's beak, drag a big parcel of linen and woman's apparel, shouting: "This is for my sweetheart, this is for Paris! C'est pour ma belle, c'est pour Paris!"

A little further along, they learned that Murat's headquarters had been transferred to the Vshivaja hill; retracing their steps, they soon reached the big house belonging to Batashoff, the gold merchant and manufacturer. Two sentries were stationed at the gate, and a guard of honour was drawn up in the yard. Over the house the royal red and green flag was floating; saddled horses were already waiting in the garden, bound to boar spears, and tramping down the turf and flower beds. Generals, junior officers and orderlies stood upon the perron. On the lower steps stood a stout, elderly man, wearing a blue coat with a frill; he was saluting, hat in hand, and almost weeping.

"What the devil does he want? Qu'est qu'il chante, voyons?" shouted with an air of annoyance, the general on duty, whom the old man was addressing with many gestures.

" Here is a Russian officer whom General Sebastiani has sent to see His Majesty," said the aide-de-camp.

" Ah, tant mieux," replied the general, then addressing Perovski, he added : " Will you have the goodness to tell us what this man wants ? "

The man was the manager and majordom for Batashoff.

" What is it you require," asked Basil without dismounting, " tell me, and I shall translate your request."

" Ah, batyoushka, benefactor of the orthodox faith," exclaimed the stout man, happily, as he crossed himself. " And so you too are a prisoner like ourselves ? "

" Not at all," curtly replied Basil blushing ; " you see I have my sword ; I am free, but what is it you want ? "

" Well, it is like this ; my name is Maxim Sokoff, I am the house steward of the Batashoffs ; they have swooped down here with their king—may the unholy take them !—like so many beasts of prey. There are not less than thirty generals, and they have all installed themselves here since last night. Unable to do anything against superior forces, we prepared a copious supper for them. We went out to find some bread but there was no white bread to be had, none but black, and only a small oblong loaf for their king. They were so angry," continued the poor Maxim, mopping the perspiration from his forehead. . . . " And every general is clamouring for a feather bed and a separate room—and where are we to find them ? " (here

he cast a glance full of irritation at the French standing around). "Their king took his meal in the drawing-room, and slept in the bed of the masters; the others passed the night in the big reception room, the dining room, and in the corner room, but they were not satisfied, for they disdained the divans and couches and demanded the cushions and beds of the masters; they threw our people out of the windows. The candles burned all night in the big candelabra and in the lamps, and as for ourselves, batyoushka, they treated us as if we were beggars and dirt. It is absolute ruin. This morning, when all their generals and their horde woke up in the big house, in the musician's wing, in the conservatory, in the kitchen, they all at once demanded tea, food, brandy, burgundy, champagne. It was simply maddening, enough to make one drown oneself."

Basil translated the steward's complaints.

"Yes, yes, champagne," laughed one of the officers of the suite," but what the devil does he want?"

"They have also been molesting the women, chasing them in the garden and in the kitchen," continued the house steward with a look full of hatred towards the French. "To-day I make so bold as to tell them, and I beg of you to repeat it to them, that their soldiers have carried away from the kitchen, not only the fresh bread, but even the unbaked bread. Have you ever seen such goings on? One of their officers, a little dark one, oh, I would recognize that chap anywhere, came this morning with a stable man and they broke the

lock of the coach-house, harnessed one of our trotters to the Vienna carriage and went off; they have, perhaps, stolen the horse and carriage, but what do they care, the brigands? There are some among them who only have a threadbare uniform to their backs, and a patched pair of trousers. And I—I am responsible to the master. 'That is how you have watched over my things, Sokoff,' he will say."

Perovski translated the speech.

XVII

The audience was still laughing heartily, when suddenly there was a commotion and everyone became silent. They flung themselves towards the perron upon which a general appeared; he was tall, slim, had a Roman nose, an engaging countenance and vivacious, laughing eyes; his light brown hair, cut short on the forehead, fell down from his temples in long curly locks over his shoulders. He wore a tri-cornered hat, embroidered with gold, a short tunic of green silk, maroon-coloured breeches blue stockings, and Polish boots; on his breast was a gold chain, formed of eagles and hanging on a red ribbon; he wore earrings like a woman, and had a Turkish sabre at his belt; from his open collar, the ends of a lace neckerchief peeped out negligently. This was Murat, the King of Naples. The general on duty approached, and reported about the Russian officer who had just arrived.

"What is it that you have to tell me, Captain?" asked Murat, fixing his intelligent and kindly eyes upon Perovski, and politely lifting his hat as he walked elegantly towards the black horse, covered with an embroidered saddle cloth held ready for him.

"General Sebastiani sent me to your Majesty, who wished to see me."

"Ah yes, but pray excuse me, mon cher," replied Murat as he briskly jumped into his saddle. "I am in a hurry, you see. On my return from the parade, I shall be delighted to listen to you. Take care of him and of his horse," he added, affectionately saluting Basil. Then, escorted by his brilliant suite, he galloped away with a somewhat theatrical elegance. The general on duty placed Perovksi in the care of the orderlies and Basil was led away to the musician's wing that looked out upon the garden. Here he remained alone for some time. Pacing up and down his room he finally opened a door and saw a sentry in the antechamber; through the window, he noticed another sentry under a lime tree, guarding with shouldered rifle a military baggage waggon.

At last, he heard footsteps approaching, and the house steward came in panting; a servant carrying a breakfast on a tray, followed him.

"Oh, those gluttons, those demons!" lamented the old man as he pulled a wicker bottle out of his pocket. "However, I have managed to save something. Take this batyoushka, it is real Jamaica rum."

Perovski emptied a glass and breakfasted copiously.

"Petia," said the house steward, to the boy, "we have still some ham and smoked goose left; here, take the key of the pantry; they have not yet taken it from me, though they have eaten up everything. You will also find some fresh butter in a little pot behind the door, bring it all here quickly."

The servant left, and Maxim sat down on the edge of a chair and wiped his brow.

"They will not lack any light here; they will have as much as they require to illumine their departure, these monsters," said the steward after a short silence.

"How is that?" asked Basil.

"Don't you know? Look out of the window; Moscow is burning."

"Where? How?"

"It started first at the Pokrovka, no doubt. When I came here I saw the fire at the Zamoskvarietshe. They have all gone out to look at it, gesticulating and talking in their own gibberish."

Basil went to the window; the trees prevented him from seeing the river but above their tops he perceived a thick column of smoke, threateningly curling up from the direction of the Donskoi monastery.

"Ah, these wicked pagans have caused a great deal of harm, and have destroyed many innocent victims; what an account they will have to render on the day of the last judgment!"

"Do you think it was our people who started the fire?"

"How could it be otherwise, batyoushka?" retorted the astonished Maxim. "As we have not had time to save our goods, it is best to burn them. For instance, I, who have spent my life keeping watch over my master's possessions, my hands are now itching to seize a torch and roast them and their hordes in their sleep, not forgetting their robber, Bonaparte."

"There we have the Russian people," thought Basil, "they have understood our civilised conquerors more simply and truly than we others."

"Uncle," said the boy hurrying back, "they are breaking open the boxes; I did not dare go down to the cellar."

"Who is breaking open the boxes?" cried Maxim, bounding from his chair.

"The soldiers are in your room; they are carrying away the dishes, the holy images, your clothes, everything; they have taken your fox fur-coat, and aunt's new dressing gown out of the box."

"Ah, they will remember us," cried the dismayed steward. He rushed out into the corridor and never returned. Piercing cries were heard coming from the lower apartments; a handful of soldiers, headed by a sergeant, emerged from the garden gate, and crossed the yard; the pillage was stopped and silence fell; an hour passed. Basil, tortured by doubts and trembling for his own fate tried vainly to understand why he was being detained. He stretched himself upon a settee. Again the idea of escaping occurred to him but how? Where? At last, he heard the noise made by spurred boots coming towards him; an attaché of the general staff entered and informed him that the King of Naples who had been detained at the Kremlin by Napoleon, had just returned and was dining; he summoned Perovski to his presence. Perovski was taken to an anteroom, where he was again kept waiting for a considerable time. The loud voices of the diners, mingled with the noises made by plates and the popping of champagne

corks, reached his ears. When he was at last ushered in, the candles had been lit. Murat was writing, looking gloomy and pre-occupied.

"Ah, what a day, captain," he exclaimed; "I have kept you waiting. What unexpected worries we have! Sit down. You are an educated Russian; explain one thing to me which we fail to understand. Why are the Russian people so afraid of us? What is the meaning of this inexplicable flight of all the peaceful inhabitants of Moscow?"

"It is a rather embarrassing question for me to answer," said Basil, "I belong to the enemy camp."

"Speak without fear," rejoined Murat with an amiable and protecting air, as he watched the Russian officer with his tired but observant eyes; "I assure you that I do not understand it at all."

Perovski remembered the threats of the portly Maxim and the straw torch.

"For two centuries," he replied, "Moscow has not been invaded by an enemy. I do not know what Russia will say when she learns that the city has been abandoned without even a fight for it, and that the enemy has entered the Kremlin."

"Are we then barbarians, Scythians?" asked Murat, smiling condescendingly, "In what way are we threatening the lives and property of the Moscovites? The city has been abandoned to us without a struggle, and our soldiers, like mariners perceiving land, in view of this ancient and grandiose city, exclaimed: "Moscow means peace, the end of a long and loyal fight." Yesterday we accepted the prolongation of the armistice, we allowed your

detachments and luggage trains to pass—and now, suddenly. . . ."

"But without the armistice, our army would have fought," replied Perovski; "instead of sabres, you would have met knives in every thoroughfare, at every street corner. . . ."

"And why such a reception? What is the meaning of these fires? It is nothing more nor less than a trap," said Murat rising in a passion.

"I have been detained here since yesterday," observed Perovski lowering his eyes, "the fires have only started since then."

"It is treachery!" continued Murat, excitedly pacing the room; "the police does not exist; the pumps have disappeared; it is evident that Rostoptshin gave the signal to the accomplices he left behind to burn Moscow out. But we will pay him back. His description has been sent out everywhere; dead or alive, we shall catch him. That is not the way to behave towards him who was with you at Tilsit and Erfurt."

"Your Majesty," said Perovski, "I am only a simple soldier, and the duties of my service are urgent; political questions are not in my line. If you have now learned from me all that you were anxious to know, I beg of you to let me return to my post. I am aide-de-camp of General Miloradovitsh, and it was he who sent me."

"How? You are not a prisoner? asked Murat in astonishment.

"No, I am not a prisoner," replied Perovski, "General Sebastiani detained me during the armistice, saying that your Majesty wished to see

me ; his aide-de-camp who brought me here, could corroborate my words."

Murat reflected for a moment, then rang the bell, and asked for the aide-de-camp, who had come with Perovski, but he had already left.

" I believe you," he then said. " Now I remember Sebastiani suggesting that I should see a Russian officer. So it was you ? I was to have sent you back to General Miloradovitsh, but now it does not depend upon me ; you must have a permit from the chief of the general staff, General Berthier. It is late now," he added, bowing slightly, " and you cannot enter the Kremlin, the residence of the Emperor at this hour. I shall send you there with pleasure to-morrow morning."

Once more Perovski was taken back to the musician's wing. Crossing the yard he heard insults, and the voice of a man saying : " But my beauty, I assure you that the Signora Prascovia will be respected everywhere."

" Go to the devil, you dolt," retorted a woman's voice. " If you don't leave me alone, I shall knock you down with a log, or call for help."

XVIII

WITHOUT undressing Basil stretched himself upon a couch. Neither the house steward nor any of the servants came to him; he passed the night without closing his eyes. In the morning, the same officer came to tell him that he had received instructions to send him to Berthier, accompanied by an officer.

In the yard, Perovski saw his companion already mounted on horseback, so he asked for his horse. A search was made everywhere in the gardens, in the stables, but the horse was nowhere to be found; it had disappeared. Basil was, therefore, obliged to follow on foot as far as the Kremlin.

All along the way, in the Solianka and Varvarka streets, in front of the Foundling Hospital and Zaryadie, and near the Gostinoydvor, Basil's heart became heavier and heavier as he saw what was taking place. Even near the residence of the King of Naples, in the Solianka, groups of drunken and riotous soldiers were wandering about, carrying various objects which they had stolen from the houses and shops. Through an open door of the Church of St. Barbara the Martyr, Basil saw horses stabled up to the sanctuary, and on the walls "The stables of General Guilleminot" was scrawled in coal.

The weather had changed; thick clouds hid the sky, and a piercing northerly wind was blowing. In the open square before the Barbara Gates, a big bonfire had been lit with the furniture thrown out of the windows; chairs, soft sofas, gilded frames, lacquered tables—everything was blazing. Sparks were whirling over the old roofs of the adjoining houses but none paid any heed. Suddenly, Perovski saw a thick column of smoke rising up from the house of Batashoff, which he had just left. "Had the old house steward kept his word, then," he asked himself, as he neared the Gostinoidvor. "It is quite possible, for the old chap had a very determined air about him. I really begin to believe that it *is* the Russians who are setting everything on fire."

The shops of the Gostinoidvor were shrouded in smoke. French soldiers, belonging to various regiments, dirty, and clad in rags, were busy carrying away part of the spoil, and disputing over it among themselves: boxes of tea, dry raisins, sacks full of fruit, casks of wine, sugar, honey, bales of cloth and linen. Near Zaryadie, he saw a band of drunken marauders dragging two prisoners, one wearing a grey hat and a blue frockcoat, as was the fashion of the day, and the other, aged, tall and lean, was disguised as a Russian peasant. The robbers deprived the younger one of his frockcoat, his hat, his boots and stockings, and there he stood on the pavement, barefooted, pale and frightened. The soldiers holding the other prisoner were busy compelling him to sit down that they might take off his boots.

"But that is Gerambeau with his companion of the other day," muttered Basil, in surprise. "What treatment! And from whom? From his own conquering countrymen!" At that moment, Gerambeau also recognised Perovski, but thinking that Basil was an envoy sent to Moscow to discuss terms, he dared not implore his protection.

"This is infamous," said Basil, indignantly pointing out the scene to his companion. "Are you not going to put a stop to it? It is brutality towards peaceful inhabitants, brigandage in broad daylight. I know the man wearing a *caftan;* he is a compatriot of yours."

"Ah bah! A Frenchman? But since he lives at Moscow it does not matter," replied the officer, galloping and passing the group. "What would you expect me to do? They will be questioned, and if found innocent, will be set free. All these are small annoyances, inseparable from war. That is all. But you others, you have condemned your guests to solitude and boredom. Not only have the men left, but the ladies too have gone. That is cruel. Where are your charming *barinyas*, your young maidens?"

Basil cast a swift glance at his companion and saw that he was drunk. The drum was beating, and the wind raised a whirl of dust; one could hear the tramping of horses and the creaking wheels of a luggage train. A regiment of guards on horseback, followed by artillery, marched under the Spasski Gates, then in front of the Church of Vassili-Blajenni on their way to the Kremlin. Then came vehicles, new open carriages, their

varnish glistening; they had been taken from the various carriage-making establishments; dust-covered cavalry soldiers with sunburnt faces, and wearing brass helmets, were seated on the boxes; at the door of one landau he saw the laughing faces of girl prisoners caught in the suburbs of Moscow; they were gaily cracking nuts.

"Well, what do you complain of?" said Basil to his companion. "There you have the Sabine prisoners for the modern Romans."

"Not for us, for the others," retorted the officer, with a plaintive sigh, pointing to the Kremlin. "The Emperor slept in the palace of the Tsars," he continued. "He went out on the terrace in the moonlight to admire the fairy-like city of a thousand and one nights. This morning he told the King of Naples that he will order a tragedy to be written and entitled, 'Peter the Great.' Notice the difference: the other went to the west to study and came back to teach you what he had learnt; whilst this one has himself come to bring you civilisation."

They could not continue along that road, so Perovski and his conductor passed the Church of Vassili Blajenni, descended towards the river, and entered the Kremlin through the Tainitzki Gate. Here Basil saw hastily constructed stoves in which confidential and trustworthy servants were throwing vases, chalices, reliquaries, crosses and other precious objects taken from the churches, and out of which ingots were being made.

"Does this not make you indignant either?" said Perovski, pointing to the sacrilege being com-

mitted. "And it is we who are called barbarians!"

"I would advise you," retorted his companion, "to abstain from judgment; it is not permitted here. We are thinking of war and not of church ornaments. We have half a million soldiers and not one priest," he added, smiling. "You had better tell us where your barinyas* and barishnas† are hidden away. But here we are; this way, please."

At the entrance of the castle, near the Red Staircase, two sentries on horseback, enveloped in their large white coats, were standing motionless. The guard of honour, composed of grenadiers of the old guard, was installed in the interior, and on the perron of the Arkhangelsk Cathedral. The soup of the soldiers was boiling in a vast cauldron over a big, blazing fire. Perovski's companion, recognising a friend in the commandant of the guard, handed his charge over to the latter. The prisoner was led into the cathedral, where he was immediately surrounded by officers who asked him numerous questions, and laughed when he told them that he was not a prisoner.

The cathedral looked indescribably desolate; not only was the corps of guards stationed there, but also a warehouse of supplies, a butchery and a kitchen. The holy images taken from the walls had been placed upon boxes containing groats or flour, and served the soldiers as seats; in the sanctuary, a couch had been made with the doors of the Holy of Holies placed against the altar, and was covered with a lilac silk priestly garment.

* Term for married ladies. † Young Ladies.

It was occupied by the regimental cook, a chubby, ruddy lady, who was busy paring carrots. The table and the altar were heaped with numerous kitchen utensils; geese and pieces of game hung from the big chandelier; nails had been driven in the iconostasis* and supported quarters of bleeding beef, which were carefully enveloped in a rich altarcloth; soldiers were smoking and playing cards; the atmosphere was suffocating.

The officers surrounding Perovski asked him what had become of the Russian army; where were Kutuzuff and Rostoptshin; and they complained that they could find neither tailors nor bootmakers to replenish their wardrobes. Soon they would not even be able to buy anything, either, for since yesterday Moscow had started to burn on all sides. Basil replied that the Russians were suffering even more through the French. Soon he followed his companion to Berthier's apartments.

* Holy Picture.

XIX

THEY crossed several reception rooms full of officers of the Imperial suite, of pages in gold embroidered uniforms, and then at last, Perovski found himself in a gallery leading to the River Moskva. In front of a big gilded door, stood two mamelukes* in white turbans and red morning coats; a little powdered page in uniform and silk stockings held a big book under his arm, and, like the mamelukes, never took his eyes away from the door. The din of voices could be heard in the adjoining chamber. Basil looked through the window. The spectacle it presented to him was horrible; an entire quarter of Moscow was in flames. It was a very sea of fire from which emerged a few whole roofs here and there. The fire was so near that it cast a red glare into the room and upon everything in it. Basil remembered the purple colour of the sky over Moscow during his last ride with Aurora, at the Poklonnaja Hill. One might believe it to have been a prophecy, he thought, with a sigh.

"You are admiring the fruit of your works," briskly said a voice behind them.

He turned round and saw Berthier, the chief of the general staff, through, as it were, a halo of

* Negro Slaves.

flames ; he was surrounded by his aides-de-camp. He was a lean old man with a narrow chest, and was visibly suffering from a severe cold ; his cheeks were red with fever, he wore a woollen muffler around his throat and his eyes were blazing with anger.

" It is revolting," he continued. " You and your people ; you will pay me for this."

" I fail to understand you, Marshal. What is it that you are accusing the Russians of having done ? "

" Do you hear, he is excusing himself," cried Berthier, angrily. " Your compatriots are burning a magnificent city which they have abandoned. They are burning us, us, and we must not accuse them ! But we shall know the truth. A committee has been appointed to discover the incendiaries. Everything will be discovered."

" Pardon me, Marshal, I have been detained here during the armistice ; the fires have only started since, therefore, I am unable to explain the cause to you. I beg you to give instructions that will permit me to return to my post. General Sebastiani gave me his word ; the word of a French soldier."

" I cannot help that," snapped Berthier, irritated with his cough. " It is beyond my power to send you back. I am told that you have passed two days among the French troops ; you have not been properly watched ; you might have seen and heard things that you should not know."

" It is not my fault that I have been detained at the front posts," said Basil. " Ask those who

detained me. I repeat, I make so bold as to protest; this is violence, for I am not a prisoner. Are the sentiments of justice and honour, the word of a French general? . . . . "

"Honour! Justice!" cried Berthier, pointing to the window with a gesture of contempt. "How will the Russians redeem this act of vandalism? All I can do for you is to submit your request to the Emperor. Wait, he will, perhaps, hear you himself, although I cannot guarantee it; he is very busy."

At this moment a great noise was heard; people shouted and screamed: "Fire! Fire! We are burning." Everyone rushed to the windows, but no one could discover where the fire had broken out. Great commotion followed. Berthier sent his aide-de-camp to find out where the fire was, whilst he himself walked towards the door guarded by the mamelukes.

This door suddenly opened, and upon the threshold appeared a portly man of about forty or forty-five; he was rather short in stature. The fire glare outside fell full upon his pale face and illuminated it; his few hairs, carefully combed and tended, fell in short locks over his grey-blue eyes; his chin was half buried in the folds of his white cravat; he wore breeches of doeskin and high boots with tassels; there was no decoration upon his sand-grey frock coat, open over his chest. On his appearance, all in the hall stood still, saluted, and remained like so many statues. As for himself, he neither saluted nor looked at anyone. He held a paper in one hand and a snuff-box in the

other; his face looked discontented, and he, like Berthier, seemed to be suffering from a cold in the head.

Perovski at once recognised Napoleon. The blood rushed to his head. "There he is, the hero of Marengo and of the Pyramids," he thought, staring intently at the Emperor. "Is it possible that this was my idol, my God Almighty of yore? Only a few days ago he was galloping towards the Rajevski redoubt, and now here am I but a few steps from him. Is it possible that he has anything in common with these men who surround him, and who are doing so much harm in his name? No, whatever he is, he is a messenger of Providence; he will understand me, and I shall be free." He took a step towards Napoleon, but two hands seized him as in a iron grip, and a threatening voice whispered in his ear: "If you move you are a dead man!" Si vous osez y toucher, je vous tue!

He heard a brisk and haughty voice. "He is speaking," thought Basil, with a shiver of enthusiasm.

"The Russians are burning us out, you will inform the Prince of Eckmuhl," said Napoleon, negligently handing the paper to Berthier. "Shoot by the tens and hundreds; it is my command. But what is this noise?" he asked, looking around, and Basil had the impression that he was also looking at him. He felt a kind of ecstatic torpor steal over him.

"New incendiaries have been caught and brought here to-day," reported Berthier, bowing, "and

the President of the Commission, General La Here, is following up clues to the criminals. Here is one of the officers whom I sent out to inquire what is happening in the castle."

Napoleon slowly inhaled some snuff, and then fixed his stern eyes upon the young officer.

"There is no danger, your Majesty," reported the officer, bowing low before the Emperor. "It was only some timber that had caught fire from a wandering spark; the logs have been scattered, and everything is now in order."

"Tell the inspector of the castle that he is a fool," retorted Napoleon. "Everything is in order! What luck! Double and treble the price upon Rostoptshin's head, and have the incendiaries shot without pity or trial."

Having said this, Napoleon rudely turned his back upon Berthier, and went into his room, slamming the door behind him.

At that moment, Basil was struck even more strongly with the shocking disproportion between the long waist and the short legs of the Emperor; he was also struck by the cold and hard expression in his eyes. The Italian accent of the Emperor was very pronounced; he almost said *sance* instead of *chance*, and spoke very rapidly. Perovski felt like a man who has fallen from a great height. "A price upon the head of Rostoptshin; men shot by the hundreds," he repeated, "so that is what this crowned Corsican soldier is really like! He has crossed half of Europe to bring fire and sword to us, and he was my ideal, my idol! How right Aurora was! Ah heaven, if I could only escape!"

"Follow me," said one of Berthier's aides-de-camp.

The anteroom was by now half empty, and those who remained looked askance and half suspiciously at the Russian officer.

"Where to?" inquired Perovski.

"You are to wait outside the castle until the Emperor has been spoken to about you."

Basil went out upon the perron d'honneur; below an officer was questioning a police agent who had just been arrested.

"Why did you stay at Moscow when all the other police officials left? Who is setting Moscow on fire? And by whose instructions is it being done?"

Pale and trembling with fright, the poor man looked in dismay at the officer interrogating him. Not understanding a single word of French, he remained silent.

"I believe that at last we have caught the leader of the incendiaries," triumphantly remarked the French officer, turning to Berthier's aide-de camp. "He must know everything, and must have been left behind to superintend it all."

Perovski could not refrain from interfering; he questioned the prisoner and translated his answers. The man was not guilty. He had been left behind to pack up various objects belonging to the crown. He was looking for a carriage for himself and his wife when he was arrested at the gate by the night watch.

"We shall see," replied the examining officer,

sternly. "The Commission will get the truth out of you. In the meantime, lock him up with the others."

XX

THE soldiers seized the accused, and led him down underneath the terrace to the cellar that served as a prison.

"I assure you," said Perovski, "that the police officers have had no hand in the incendiarism; this man is the father of a family."

"That has nothing to do with us," retorted the officer; "we only execute our orders."

"But what is to be the fate of the poor people in the cellar," asked Basil.

"Oh, that is a simple matter; they will be hanged, though if some pity be shown to them, they will be shot."

The aide-de-camp whispered something to the officer, and the latter pointed to the church, Spassana-borou. Basil was asked to follow his companion. They left the castle and approached the peristyle whence one could clearly see the flames of Zamoskvorietshe.

"Why do we come here?" asked Basil of the aide-de-camp, who was busy pushing back the bolt and opening the door.

"It is forbidden to set you free," the latter replied as he signed that Perovski should enter the church. "The Emperor will, no doubt, shortly summon you to his presence; at present he is lunching."

"But why should the Emperor desire to see me?"

"He will, perhaps, wish to send a message by you to your chiefs. We have found several thousand Russian wounded here, and we are rather short of medical assistance. Besides, there are these fires. In any case, I am only expressing my own personal opinion. Au revoir."

The iron gate fell heavily back into its place and closed. Perovski, left alone, threw himself in despair upon the ground. His last hope was vanishing. His only consolation was that he had not been shut up in the same cellar as the other unhappy prisoners, accused of having set Moscow on fire. He wondered what was to be his fate. An hour passed and then another. No one came near him; he had evidently been forgotten. He had had neither food nor drink since the early morning and suffered greatly from thirst and hunger but, above all, he was a prey to the torment and agony of his thoughts. Suppose that, in the midst of this general disorder, I am forgotten altogether? Murat's drunken aide-de-camp has doubtless already left the castle like Sebastiani's aide-de-camp. The officer on guard has doubtless been relieved. Who will remember that a Russian officer has been locked up in this church, and how long shall I have to wait here in vain? Various possibilities, each more agonising than the other, tormented his brain. He lay there motionless, stretched out upon the ground with his head on the steps of the sanctuary. His fatigue and mental torture finally caused him to lose consciousness, and he only came to himself again towards the evening. The sinister

glare of the flames lit up the windows of the old church; the figures of the saints seemed to look down with compassion upon the unhappy young man; various objects lay scattered upon the floor that had been forgotten in the general pillage; the shadow of the double shrine falling upon the walls and flagstones made the old church resemble an iron cage. "Why, Oh, my God, do you let me pass through this furnace?" he lamented; "why is my strength so useless?" Scenes of his life crowded his memory; he remembered his love-making to Aurora; he saw himself again bidding good-bye to her. Tropinin and Mitia Oussoff, were they still alive? Where were they? Where was his fiancée? Had she had time to leave Moscow with her grandmother? Or had she, perhaps, tried to escape and, like the poor police officer, been too late? They might have been arrested. What will become of them? He pictured Aurora as a captive; the terror of the old Princess, helpless and defenceless, and his well-beloved exposed to the brutalities of the soldiers. He trembled, a prey to hunger and thirst, and searched the altar and floor for crumbs of the consecrated bread. He picked up the smallest crumbs and greedily devoured them. Another long terrible night, more horrible than the first. He shut his eyes and tried to sleep, but no sleep would come. The howling wind and the continuous shouting of the soldiers repeatedly woke him. He rose, a little delirious, listened, jumped up, and then again fell back upon the flagstones. Nobody came to him. At dawn, he heard a noise at first

indistinctly, then clear and loud. Voices shouted "Help! Water!" People were running past the front of the church; the fire was evidently very near; it was perhaps the church itself that was on fire. A soldier hastily crossed the yard, pages and aides-de-camp were running in all directions; the drums beating in a distant field could be heard clearly; mounted guards were lining up in front of the church, and soon the square was crowded with troops; in the midst of the cries, one could hear the rolling of the carriages leaving.

Long afterwards, Basil learned that it was the roof of the arsenal that had caught fire; the firemen extinguished it. Awakened by this new alarm, Napoleon became furious, and hit the mameluke who was handing him his doeskin breeches, full in the face with his boot. He swore terrifically, called Berthier, and announced that he intended to leave the Kremlin. An hour later he had taken up his residence outside Moscow in the castle Petrovski. A detachment of guards escorted the Emperor. The place became deserted. The wind howled, raising a heavy cloud of dust, heavy drops of rain were falling. Perovski listened and looked round, but no one came near him.

"My God," he cried in his despair, shaking the bars of the window, "give me death rather than this torture." At that instant he heard voices, steps were approaching. Perovski rushed to the door, and waited, panting; he listened, would they pass or stop? The steps approached the church, the bolt creaked, the door opened, a detachment of grenadiers headed by a tall sergeant was on the

perron ; at the foot of the steps two soldiers were holding over a stick a cauldron full of steaming soup.

" Hullo, the apartment is already occupied," gaily remarked the sergeant, examining the church, " and we had hoped to take our meal here quietly, and then have a rest. Captain," he continued, addressing someone in the yard, " there is a Russian here. What are we to do with him ? "

A tall, thin officer, with long curly hair, cast an indifferent glance at the prisoner, and then turned away.

" I suppose he cannot remain here with us ? " queried the sergeant.

" Put him in the cellar with the others," negligently replied the officer and walked away. A mist passed before Perovski's eyes, he felt giddy ; rushing to the door, he pushed the soldiers aside and hurried out upon the perron.

" Where are you ordering me to be taken ? With whom ? " he cried, horrorstruck, addressing the Captain. " This is against all law, this that you are doing. I know what the other prisoners are accused of, and what is the fate in store for them."

The Captain stopped in surprise.

" I was detained here during the armistice and they have forgotten me here. You see, they left me my sword and you. . . ."

" Pray, excuse me," rejoined the Captain, as if suddenly awakened, " I have made a mistake."

" Thank you, that mistake would have cost me my life."

"Oh," said the Frenchman, pressing Perovski's hand, "that would indeed have been a misfortune. I shall immediately ask where I shall put you." Half-an-hour later he returned. "I have been ordered to take you to the Prince of Eckmuhl; you will be treated with every possible consideration." He ordered a grenadier on horseback, whom he had brought, to accompany Perovski. "Worse and worse," thought Perovski, "here am I arrested for the fourth time, and I am being taken before whom? before the terrible Marshal Davout."

XXI

The Prince of Eckmuhl had taken up his headquarters in the house of the big manufacturer Miliukoff, on the Dievitshepole. Perovski followed the grenadier through the burning streets, where a few houses were still blazing ; he scarcely recognized the city They passed through the Volkhonka and Pretshistenka streets ; pillaging and sacking were still going on furiously. In the midst of the smoke, the soldiers dragged along boxes full of wine and eatables, and bales of cloth. In front of the gates of houses which had been spared by the fire, groups of famished, dirty soldiers disputed among themselves over their booty. In the open squares, fires blazed to warm the soldiers, surprised by the sudden cold. Near the church of the Trinity the grenadier asked an artillery soldier of his acquaintance for the shortest cut to the house where the marshal was lodged. Through the open doors of the church, serving as lodging for the chief of the battery established in this quarter, Basil saw a bay horse covered with a priestly garment of gold cloth, eating its oats from the baptismal font. After replying to the questions of his comrade, the artillery soldier turned his brilliant eyes towards the church and went to caress the magnificent animal. Clicking his tongue, he said : " Isn't it a

splendid horse. It is more like a human being than an animal ; it understands everything ; it is nice and warm for it in here, and it has as much oats as it likes. We took it from a Count. In Paris, we shall get thousands for it."

On the square Zouboff, near a house half consumed by fire, one could still read upon a signboard well-known to Perovksi, the words ; Grenistav, Parisian tailor. A butchery had been established in the interior of a ruined steeple ; the purveyors waited outside and a grenadier, arrayed in the brocaded coat of a deacon distributed the meat with his bloodstained hands. Suddenly the crowd rushed towards a side street whence carts, escorted by soldiers, emerged ; it was a convoy of young women in peasant costume, their heads wrapped in shawls. Everyone gazed greedily at the captives.

" What is that ? Where have these women come from ? " asked the grenadier.

" They are dancers disguised ; they have been caught in the wood ; now we shall have a properly appointed theatre."

The two men reached the Dievitshepole at noon. The two storeyed stone house of Miliukoff, where Marshal Davout had established his general staff was situated on the banks of the Moskva, near the Dievitshe convent, facing a garden still in bloom. The cambric factory adjoined the private residence. The proprietor and his workmen had left Moscow on the eve of the day that the French entered the city. On the open square, an artillery practice ground had been established ; a guard stood at the

door. In the yard one saw the four-seater carriage which had brought the Marshal.

Perovski was taken into the reception room used by the suite. The aide-de-camp disappeared into a study, came out again, asked Perovski for his sword and then ushered him in. The study looked out upon an avenue of the garden at the end of which one could see one of the contours of the river. The window was open, and a light breeze entered the room, strewing the floor with leaves from the old lime trees. The Marshal had his back turned to the door, and continued to write when the Russian officer entered ; he did not raise his head.

" Is this the redoubtable Davout ? " thought Perovski, " the most pitiless of all Bonaparte's marshals ? " He contemplated the bent back, the bald head of this delicate and sickly old man, dressed in an old blue uniform. The pen continued to scratch upon the paper. Davout was silent. Thus a few moments passed.

" Who is there ? " queried a low voice that seemed to Perovski to be coming from the other side of the window ; he remained silent.

A gesture of discontent was heard. " Who are you ? " repeated the voice, " you are being spoken to and yet you are as silent as a block of wood ! "

" A Russian officer," replied Basil.

" An envoy ? "

" No."

" A prisoner ? "

" No,"

Davout turned round. " Then who on earth

are you ? " he cried in an angry voice, as he scrutinized Perovski.

The latter calmly explained how he had been sent, during the armistice, by General Miloradovitsh to the outposts ; how he had been detained, first by General Sebastiani, then by Murat, and at last, by Berthier and how, in spite of the promise he had received, and contrary to all war usages, he had not yet been set free.

" Armistice ? " growled Davout, " what armistice are you talking about ? Which armistice, when here at Moscow, which was abandoned to us, we have been treacherously fired upon. You are a prisoner, do your hear, a prisoner, and you will remain here until—until you are wanted."

" Pardon, Monsieur le Maréchal," retorted Perovski, " but I am not responsible for the others. . . . . there is a fatal error here ! "

" Rubbish, à d'autres, à d'autres," interrupted Davout, " you cannot deceive me."

" My freedom was promised to me on his word of honour by a French general."

Davout rose from his chair. " Silence," he thundered, clenching his fists, " your days are numbered. Anyhow I recognise you." He seemed to be endeavouring to remember something.

Perovski anxiously watched the pale, thin lips, the enormous bald forehead, the small wicked eyes that were examining him suspiciously from underneath bushy eyebrows.

" Yes, I recognise you," repeated Davout, freeing with an effort his wrinkled cheeks from his stiff collar and re-seating himself in his easy

chair. "This time you shall not escape. Your name?"

"Perovski."

The marshal bent over a list before him and inscribed the name he had just heard.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Maréchal," said Basil, making an effort to remain calm, "but you are mistaken. This is the first time that I have had the honour of seeing you."

Davout's eyes flashed lightning. "Don't try to deceive me, you will not succeed. You were made a prisoner at Smolensk, you were set free on parole; then you escaped after you had succeeded in learning all you wanted to know about us."

"I assure you," replied Perovski, "that I was arrested for the first time when the French troops entered Moscow. Ask the King of Naples and General Sebastiani."

Davout again jumped to his feet; his face was absolutely disfigured by anger. "Devil take you for the liar that you are!" he cried furiously, lifting his clenched fist. "I tell you straight that a bandage over your eyes and twelve bullets in your head is what you shall receive." He rang a bell. "Call a sergeant and twelve men," he thundered to the aide-de-camp who hastened to answer his summons.

"This is an injustice that will cry aloud for vengeance!" said Perovski, shuddering in spite of himself, when he heard the ferocity with which the Prince of Eckmuhl gave the fatal order. "And I suppose there is no appeal against this injustice. Pardon me, Prince, but you are insulting an un-

armed prisoner, and you would assassinate him even without the farce of a trial. It is a violation of all established law."

"Ah, you wish to be tried and judged? Take care, the judgment will be short; my aide-de-camp remembers you perfectly well, for it is he who made you a prisoner. Oh, you could not deceive him."

"Then please call your aide-de-camp and confront me with him," said Perovski, though with terror he realised that the ignoble accomplice of this hangman might well have forgotten, and though failing to recognize him as the fugitive, might say, "Oh, yes, this is he!" "I could seem to him to be the man!" he thought.

The eyes of the marshal smiled strangely and his eyebrows smoothed down.

"Ah, so you wish to be confronted with him," he said giving a caressing inflection to his voice; "very well then, you shall be confronted with him. But remember, if I am not mistaken in you, you will receive no mercy. Call Olivier," he added, turning to the waiting orderly.

XXII

THE orderly left the room and Davout started to arrange the papers scattered over his desk. Basil greatly perturbed in mind, could scarcely stand upon his feet. A thought crossed his mind. Why not throw himself upon this elderly soldier, strangle him, jump out of the window, run across the gardens as far as the river, and then swim to the other side. Before the crime could be discovered, and a pursuit of the assassin begun, he would already have reached a place of safety. His hands contracted, a shiver shook him from head to foot, and his teeth chattered.

"How old are you?" asked Davout, turning round.

"I am in my twentieth year."

"You are young. Do you know Moscow?"

"I have studied here at the University."

The marshal rose and pointed to a map of Moscow hanging on the wall.

"These quarters of the city have been set on fire by the Russians," he said, pointing with a long and crooked finger; "hundreds, thousands of houses are ablaze. You too, you were here to set the place afire; I have not the slightest doubt of it."

Perovski was silent.

" Why are you burning us ? "

" Your own soldiers, either in drink or carelessness have also set many houses on fire."

" Lies ! Calumnies ! And why do the peasants not bring us in food, in view of the fact that we have offered to pay them generously ? There are numbers of agricultural villages around Moscow but not a soul comes in to the market."

" They are afraid of violence."

" That is absurd. What violence is there to be feared from a civilized army ? These are but the inventions of people like you. And Kutuzuff ? Why did he treacherously abandon such a big city, leaving neither pumps nor police behind in it ? Where is he ? "

" I have been detained here for the past two days so I know absolutely nothing of the arrangements made by our commander-in-chief."

" You are an arrant liar," said Davout, stiffening in his chair, " you are a perjured partisan and a runaway to boot. Oh, you will see how we punish people who add impudent lies to their treachery." The marshal again rang his bell ; an aide-de-camp appeared. " Well, where is Oliver ? "

" They have gone to fetch him."

Davout, weary of waiting, thought it superfluous to take any more trouble in the matter, so wrote out Perovski's sentence himself. " Here," he said, handing a heap of papers to the aide-de-camp, " these are for the general staff. As for this gentleman, hand him over to Molinat with this list."

" Molinat ? Molinat ? " repeated Perovski as

he followed the aide-de-camp, "that must be the name of the president of some court of justice."

They reached the open square which had been converted into an artillery practice ground. Then his guide handed him over to a portly, short-necked grey-headed officer. "He is Molinat," thought Perovski, as he looked at the wicked, blinking eyes of the corpulent man who listened to what the marshal's envoy had to tell him, and then dismissed him with a gesture. Without even carefully examining the list, he handed over the prisoner to the nearest post. A corporal and six soldiers advanced.

"Follow me," cried the corporal to the amazed Perovski. "Don't you understand?"

Three men, quite indifferent and calm, marched in front of him, whilst the three others, with the corporal followed. They were all quietly looking at Perovski, who, at last, began to understand what it all meant. He was led away into one of the market gardens skirting the river Moskva; near some devastated cabbage and beetroot beds stood a tall pole, and near this pole were a few freshly-filled holes.

"The graves of those who have been shot," thought Basil. "Are these men bandits? Is this really the end?" He marched between the soldiers over the soft and damp earth; the horror of his position and his helplessness were maddening him. A beautiful autumn sky stretched high above his head; all around lay the deserted gardens; a little farther away one could see the steeple of a monastery upon which croaking ravens were

swooping down; he felt bitterly that he could neither help himself, nor could those surrounding him help him. He remembered Borodino; his last conversation with Dr. Mirtoff; the rendezvous which the latter had given with him at the English club; his head swam; memories succeeded memories with a lightning, torturing speed.

Somebody was shouting behind them. The escort turned round; someone wildly waving his arms, was running after them.

"What is it?" asked the corporal.

A young soldier wearing the cap and vest of the recruit, hastily explained something.

"There is a delay," said the corporal, turning to Perovski; "it often happens this way with our Prince; evidently they forgot to give you your breakfast. Au revoir."

The prisoner was taken back to the marshal. Davout looked even gloomier and more threatening than before.

"You are surprised," said Davout when he saw Perovski. "I ask you for a full confession. If you will tell me the names of your accomplices, you may perhaps save your skin."

"I have no confession to make."

"And if I confront you with Olivier?"

"I have already asked your Highness to confront me with him," replied Perovski.

Davout rang the bell. "Where is this Olivier?" he asked the entering aide-de-camp. "Shall I ever see him?"

"He is here; he has just returned from the Duke of Vicence."

" Call him."

The door opened and shut behind Perovski.

" Come here, stand here and confront this gentleman," said the marshal.

Perovski saw a dark-faced man with a tuft of hair on his forehead, wearing an old uniform and worn-out boots. His weather-beaten face expressed abject submission to his terrible superior. His eyes looked at Basil attentively and severely.

" I am lost," thought Basil.

" Well, Olivier," said Davout addressing his aide-de-camp, " look attentively at this man and tell me, for you, better than anyone else, should be able to remember him—is this not he who passed twenty-four hours in perfect liberty in the city and then, having heard and seen everything he wished, escaped in spite of his given word ? You ought to remember him well. Two of them ran away ; one was shot down in his flight, whilst the other escaped. Is this man now before us not the same man ? "

" My fate is sealed," thought the terrified Perovski ; " this little officer is going to agree servilely with every word of his master's. Ah, if only my face could become contorted or covered with spots of leprosy, should it in any way resemble that of the runaway ! "

" Examine him well," repeated Davout ; " I am waiting."

The aide-de-camp, shuffling in his torn, ragged boots, advanced a step towards the prisoner and scrutinized him attentively, and then said in a low

voice: "Yes, I remember the occurrence of which your Highness speaks."

"You are stupid, Olivier, or you have been drinking. You are not asked whether you remember whether the thing did or did not happen. I know that myself better than you can. I but command you to answer my question: is this the same individual who escaped from Smolensk, the night after the town was taken? Do you understand me?"

Perovski noticed that the eyes of the aide-de-camp which a moment before had merely reflected calm submission, had now grown quite dull, as if indeed they had disappeared altogether. The officer touched his tuft of hair, crossed his hands on his chest, and muttered something half aloud. His lips had become even more pallid than before, and his words appeared as unexpected as terrible to Basil. He could not hear them distinctly, although they sounded like clarion calls in his ears, but he was aware that something in him was leaving him forever; in the silence that ensued, his heart contracted so painfully that he felt as if he were dying; a poignant feeling of pity for that something that was leaving him, came over him; it was his life of which they were robbing him with such callousness and he was still so young! Where were truth and divine justice? Perovski asked himself.

"I cannot hear you," shouted Davout to his aide-de-camp, "speak louder, more clearly."

"This gentleman, your Highness, I remember perfectly," said Olivier.

Perovski clinging to the back of a chair, almost

unable to stand, made a great effort to catch the words spoken by the pale lips of the aide-de-camp, lips that seemed to him to be soundless !

XXII

A FEW days after the departure of the Princess and Aurora, Ilya Borissovitsh Tropinin put on his hat and coat, and went to the Senate, where they said news had arrived from the capital. He wished to know whether the members of the Senate and of the theatrical administration had already received authorisation to leave Moscow. From Povaloshin the ex-governor of Astrakhan he learned that the old millionaire merchant, Ivan Semeonovitsh Zhivoff, whom they both knew very well, had shut up his shops in the Gostinoidvor, when he finally became certain that the French were coming, made the sign of the cross and said to his chief clerk: "I am leaving, but look to it that as soon as you see the first Frenchman enter the town that nothing is left for them. You understand? Set fire to everything, shops, houses, everything that I possess. Rather that than let them fall into the hands of the enemy."

At the very moment that Ilya arrived at the Kremlin, and entered the Senate, the French entered Moscow. He heard the cannon fired by them at the Borovitski gates when they took possession of the Kremlin. At first, Tropinin rushed towards the Spasski gates, thinking that he would be able to descend to the Moskvoretzki

bridge and escape in the crowd that was hurrying along the Zamoskvaretshe. "Quickly, quickly," he urged his cabman. Near the square of Execution, he was surrounded by a group of French soldiers, busy shouting and sacking the Gostinoidvor. Laughing they seized Ilya, who they thought looked rather funny in his blue coat, and made him sit down on the pavement; they then took off his boots, looking at him the while as if to say: "You are astonished, are you?" They took away his coat, and his hat. A big sergeant, with a freckled face and red side whiskers, showed his white teeth in a hearty laugh as he calmly appropriated Ilya's gold watch and chain, and helped himself to his rings and other jewellery. The young man, amazed at first, soon came to himself, violently pushed back the robber, and, foaming at the mouth, raged at the horde. He swore at them in French, using a few choice oaths that came back to his memory.

"Tiens! he speaks French like a true Frenchman," exclaimed the sergeant. They surrounded Ilya, pushed him under the arcade of the blazing shops, and plied him with questions; they asked him where the richest shops were, the goldsmiths, the restaurants, and wine shops.

Finally, availing himself of the commotion in the crowd, Ilya threw himself into a passage of the Gostinoidvor, and ran swiftly as far as the Varvarka, and then crouched in the cellar of a deserted house; at night, he slipped through side streets as far as the Tver boulevard, attained the garden of the rich Astashevski, whom he knew and passed the night in a summer house there. He fell asleep, harassed

by fatigue and excitement. When he awoke, he saw thin smoke floating up behind the trees; the adjoining house was burning; he left the summer house; it was broad day, and flames and smoke were everywhere; the Tverskaja, Nikitskaja and the Arbatt were on fire. He remembered the instructions given by Zhivoff about his house and property, and looked around him in terror. He was hungry, cold, and his bare feet were numbed. Where should he go? The house of the Princess was not far away and he knew that the gate-keeper had some provisions stored away. He jumped over the hedges, and climbed over some walls in order to get there. He was within a few steps of the Patriarchal Ponds, and could already see the roof of the Princess' house, when suddenly he stumbled into a group of French soldiers, carrying sacks and bales. They barred his way. An officer ordered him to take up the load of a soldier whom he had sent elsewhere! The load weighed about two or three pouds.* Tropinin submitted silently, knowing that everything comes to an end. When he had deposited his load at the Kremlin he was sent with some soldiers to fetch hay; in the evening he was given some food, and told that he was attached to the stables of the general staff. For five days, he curried the horses, cleaned the dung out from the stables and chopped wood for the officers' kitchen. One day he was sent with a soldier to bring in some oats; he took advantage of his companion's noon siesta and ran away. He was then in the neighbourhood of the Sadova. From there he could see the church

* A Russian weight, equals about 55 pounds.

of St. Yermolay ; he rushed to it through blazing streets, and finally reached the Patriarchal Ponds. But here he seemed lost, he searched in vain for the house of the Princess. Everything had disappeared or was aflame. The street was but ashes and ruins with, here and there, a few chimneys and walls still standing. With terror, Ilya realised that the house no longer existed. " My God," he cried, " is this not a bad dream ? " He looked around him and the tears flowed down his cheeks.

He walked about in the midst of this desolation and searched for what still remained of the house ; he wandered thus like a shadow, finding nothing, only hearing the roofs crack and the walls tumble down. The smoke blinded him. Near the church of Spiridoni, he became enveloped in the flames and hastily climbed a wall to escape ; in his fall into a neighbouring garden, he hurt his foot, but did not remark it at first. Soon, however, it began to pain him and then he grew anxious : " What shall I do if I become lame ? " Suddenly he heard himself called by name ; he shivered, and then saw an old greybeard watching him ; the head seemed to be popping out of the ground ; it was the red countenance of Karpp, the Princess' gatekeeper, who was climbing up out of a hole.

" How is it that you are here ? "

" I have been in hiding here for three days."

" Where are we ? "

" Don't you know ? This is our house. Everything is destroyed in the garden, even the trees are burning." He helped Ilya who was dying of hunger and fatigue, to creep down into the hole which

he had dug; then he went to the pond for some water, gave him some biscuits to eat, and insisted upon his taking some rest.

"You see," said Karpp crying bitterly, "everything is burnt; the house, the kitchen, the furniture store; the brigands sacked the place and carried everything away before the fire broke out; they even discovered the hiding place behind the newly-erected wall, and carried away the things that had been stored there. It was Telesheff's Proshka who brought them here after he had got drunk with them. And you, sir, what a state you are in, my God."

Karpp went away and soon returned, carrying an old Calmuck cloak under his coat, also some peasant boots and a sheepskin cap.

"Dress yourself in these, batyoushka Ilya Borissovitsh. It is damp here in this marsh. How these unbelievers have ruined everything! Now, dressed as you are, even should they see you, they would never lay hands upon you. But what is this? Your foot is wounded?"

Tropinin told him of his fall.

"Stay here, sir, our army will, perhaps, return, and drive out these brigands. In the meantime we shall cover this hole with some boards for the night. I shall even place some earth over them. Ah, God is punishing us; it is the end of the world."

Ilya put on the fur cloak, lay down on the straw in a corner of the hovel, and fell asleep to the sound of Karpp's voice, who busily related the adventures he had passed through. In the morning, the gatekeeper told him that soldiers had come, had rum-

maged everywhere as if searching for something in the yard ; they had even raised the beams with their sabres, but had not entered the garden, nor come near the ponds.

For two days, Ilya did not leave his hiding place. Through the half-burnt trees, he could see the fire receding and dying out in the adjoining yards. From time to time, he could perceive over the walls, detachments of the enemy soldiers, could even distinguish the words of command given either in French or German. Patrols of soldiers were out searching for the incendiaries and marauders, either friendly or hostile, and seizing all suspicious pedestrians. Some sort of an encounter took place near by. Tropinin heard the commanding officer say to his soldiers : " Forward boys, fire, take good aim ! " And shots rang out upon this order, being replied to by other shots coming from behind the chimneys. A few soldiers jumped into the garden, swearing in German ; they passed within about five feet of the hole in which crouched the two Russians. They were shouting : " Du lieber Gott ! Schwernot Kerl von Bonaparte ! " When they had gone Karpp picked up some loaves of bread, a barrel of honey, and a bale of woman's apparel ; the bread and honey would come in useful, as their stock of food was running low.

A week elapsed and Karpp declared that there was nothing left to eat ; he decided to go out and see whether he could find any food in the church of St. Yermolay, and to try and find out at the same time what was happening in Moscow He came back tired out and discontented. The enemy

he said, had appointed functionaries to govern the city; he had chosen them from among our own people.

"Whom have they appointed?"

"The deacon of the church told me; he is also in hiding, in the crypt of the church. He knows your honour; it was he who officiated at your marriage."

"Yes, but—what did he tell you?"

"He said that the enemy has appointed Marck, the jeweller of the Kousnetzki bridge sub-governor of our quarter, and the merchant Nakhodkin as mayor; his own son Pavloushka has been appointed assistant mayor. He is giving himself airs at Pokrovka too. Ah, the cowards, they are servants of the Anti-Christ! They wear no cross upon their breasts."

Tropinin remembered that he had more than once met this Paul Nakhodkin, a young debauché, a very frequent visitor at the gambling houses and a boon companion of the gypsy dancing girls; one day, he had even got him out of an ugly scrape during a festival at Novinski. Ilya shook his head as he thought thus.

"All that would not matter, sir," continued Karpp, "but you ought to see the sacrilege in the churches. These renegades, God curse them, are even filling the cathedrals with dirt and shame. They have thrown down the relics of holy Alexis and Philip; they have arranged a dormitory in the Arkhangelsk Cathedral, and placed a carpenter's bench in the Tshoudoff church above the Holy Sepulchre. They clothe themselves with the priest-

ly garments. The deacon saw Napoleon himself pass through the Sadova ; he is stout and fat, wears a grey frock coat and a tricornered hat ; he has a broad, quite plebeian face, and his skin is dark in hue—such is their Bonaparte."

Ilya remembered how very recently Perovski had adored the Emperor.

" But why has Napoleon come to hide himself in the Sadova ? "

" They say it is because the Kremlin was set on fire. He then took up his quarters outside the city. But you ought to see how the Frenchmen are being knocked down. They are being quickly drowned, the brigands ! "

" How is that ? "

" They say that when fishing in the pond, sometimes one draws up a bream and sometimes a Frenchman. They also say that their Coulaincourt is a kindly man ; when passing in front of St. Yermolay, he called the baker's little son to him and gave him a white cracknel biscuit. I have brought you some potatoes, batyoushka * you must forgive me, sir, if they are a little black ; they have been burned in the ashes, and there is no salt."

Ilya appeased his hunger, devouring with relish the carbonised potatoes.

* Little Father.

XXIII

ANOTHER few days passed. There were no provisions left in the hole. Karpp went out for news. Towards evening, Tropinin too, left the hiding place to stretch his legs. In a neighbouring garden, he saw an apple tree still bearing a few apples, which had been half roasted by the fire ; he picked a few and began to munch them greedily when a drunken French soldier grabbed him, grossly insulted him, and seizing the apple, bit a piece of it and spat it out into his face. The blood rushed to Tropinin's head ; everything whirled round him, he saw red ; he seized the soldier by the neck. A fight ensued ; the soldier, though drunk, rained mighty blows upon his opponent, and was about to fell him to the ground, when Ilya seized the Frenchman and dragged him towards the trees to the well into which he hurled him headlong. Panting, hardly daring to draw his breath, he hastily returned to the hole, still seeing in his mind's eye the terrified expression on the soldier's face, and the sight of his two worn-out boots, sticking up out of the well-opening. They haunted him.

Karpp returned empty-handed. Afraid of reprisals, Ilya told him that their hole was no longer a safe place, and that they would have to go somewhere else. They decided to call on the new mayor.

Tropinin's sleep that night was very agitated. He was a prey to night-mare and constantly saw an apple tree with curiously-shaped apples hanging on the branches, all twisted by the fire; very near was an abandoned well. Then he saw another vision; it was night, warm and perfumed; a strange red moon illumined the tops of the half-burnt birch trees; his wife Xenia came to meet him, carrying a basket full of ripe apples; their young son Kolia, gambolled on the grass, and then, suddenly, pale and covered with moss, the drowned man emerged from the well raising himself upon his hands. Ilya hastened to his wife's assistance, when the dead man precipitated himself upon the child; his soaked boots splashed upon the ground, he seized the boy with his teeth. Tropinin awoke terrified. The boards covering their hiding place had been removed, Karpp was going away. Where can he be going? thought Ilya. He got up and followed him; the gatekeeper was gliding towards the adjoining yard which the fire, so far had spared. Ilya saw Karpp creep cautiously into the coach house. What could he be doing there? Suddenly flames sprang up. There could by no doubt of it—Karpp was setting the place on fire; soon a sinister glare illuminated the courtyard, and Karpp returned to their hiding place; everything was aflame. "He is like the merchant Zhivoff," thought Ilya quickly retracing his steps so as not to be seen by the gatekeeper; "now I know who the people are who are setting Moscow on fire." And in his heart, he was very pleased.

In the morning Tropinin and Karpp called on the

new mayor. On the front of the house, in letters freshly painted, one could read the words : " Mairie de Moscow," and underneath, also in French " Secours aux indigents." Ilya mounted the stairs, leaving Karpp in the rez-de-chaussée. Paul Nakhodkin was wearing a grey suit, cut in the latest fashion, with a white sash flung over his shoulder ; he was seated in the reception room, interrogating a few vagabonds sent there by General Sokolnitski, chief of the French secret service.

Nakhodkin failed to recognise Tropinin, owing to the peasant costune in which he was clad and also because of his bristling beard. When he revealed his identity, the mere mention of his name made the young mayor blush, but nevertheless he continued to write until the gendarmes had led away the prisoners. Then he rose from his chair and adjusted his sash to give himself countenance.

" So," he began, without looking at Tropinin, " I recognise you, of course. Well, what is it you wish me to do, and why have you remained in Moscow during this time ? "

Ilya told him of his arrest, of his wounds and asked his help to enable him to leave the city, together with the Princess's old gatekeeper.

" But how ? " queried Nakhodkin, his eyes still lowered, " how, in what way ? We are very much in your debt, my father and I. You remember that time on the promenade when the hussars—but times are different now. We no longer have our own laws, but foreign laws, and then again, we are not alone." He stopped to consider. " Look

here," he continued, "the chief of their secret service, Sokolnitski, and also General Lesseps, require educated men. Could you not render a service to our conquerors? It would be a means towards obtaining what you desire."

"What service?"

"You were on the directorate of the theatrical administration! It appears that you were superintending the painting of the scenery. You even paint yourself."

"Yes, what then?"

"His Majesty, that is—well, in short, the Emperor Napoleon, has conceived the idea of organising, for his soldiers you understand, he is afraid that they may be bored—a theatre at the Nikitskaja. You, no doubt, know the house of Pozniakoff, Maria Lvovna used to live there."

"Which Maria Lvovna?"

"Maria Mashenka, the actress; have you forgotten her? It is an old story. The theatre is near her lodging; they used to give many performances there in olden times; there is a large hall with boxes and a winter garden; only the stage, the scenery and the costumes have been burned."

"And where will you get new scenery? They say that the Imperial theatre has been burnt to the ground."

"They have some artists among them. The curtain will be of gold cloth, made from sacerdotal garments; instead of a lustre, there will be church lamps."

Tropinin could scarcely believe his ears. "Is

this a renegade, a raskolnik standing before me? No, even they have more respect for religion."

"As a designer, and knowing their language so well, you ought to be very useful to them; they would lodge and board you, in a word, have pity upon you, and, it is possible, that ultimately you would obtain your freedom. As for ourselves, father and I, we shall do what we can."

Tropinin was boiling with rage, but still, he was silent as he reflected, and asked himself if it were possible, after all, for this "municipal" functionary to help him to obtain his freedom.

"Well, do you consent?" asked Nakhodkin.

"Consent to what?"

"To help them with their decorations?"

"I consent," sighed Ilya.

"That is right, I am delighted. But let us proceed in order; we shall send you first to Gregori Nikititsh."

"Who is he?"

"Koltshoughin, the bookseller in the Myasnitskaja; by the grace of the Emperor Bonaparte, he is, at present so to say, the protector of science and art; he has been appointed chief charity commissioner for the poor and the prisoners; so has General Sokolnitski. Papa, are you there?" cried Paul.

"Yes, what is it that you require?" answered a voice from the other room.

Paul went into the adjacent room and returned with his father. Peter Ivanovitsh was a tall, bald-headed old man, with a pock-marked face and a pointed beard; he wore the long frock coat of the

Russian merchant that touched his heels and top boots. He, too, had a white sash slung over his shoulder.

"You accept?" he asked Ilya, fixing his small piercing eyes on him.

"Your son suggested it."

"Paul talked good business. We are all working under the eye of God, not understanding the wherefore of things. A good many of our people have already joined the theatre; the violinist Poliakoft, the 'cellist Tatarinoff. Don't be afraid. We, too, know how to be grateful and to remember a kindness."

Tropinin and Karpp carrying a letter from Nakhodkin, were conducted by a gendarme to the Myasnitskaja. A guard of cuirassiers on horseback was posted in front of the stone house, occupied by Sokolnitski, the chief of the secret service. The two Russians were taken into a room, where a number of clerks, military and civil, were seated before tables heaped with papers. Near the door, behind a partition wall, stood a group of petitioners, women of the people, beggars, cripples, drunkards. Ilya recognised Koltshougin through the grating; in his student days, he had often bought books from him. He held out Nakhodkin's letter but Gregori Nikititsh saw nothing; his hair was cut short, and his beard had been shaved off. He was absorbed in a French officer, a pale, hook-nosed man with heavily pommaded hair, who was impatiently pointing to a map of Moscow and asking the Russian some questions through an interpreter. The interpreter, a teacher of mathe-

matics, understood but very little French and spoke even less, so the officer was rapidly losing patience. No one paid any attention to Ilya. It caused him great pain to wait around like that for his foot hurt him severely, when he stood on it. At last, Koltshougin took his letter from him.

" You know their language," he said in a tone of relief," that is excellent. You will tell your business to them yourself then. In the meantime, would you mind helping this officer to find the house of Pashkoff on the map; the principal building has been burned down, but in the remaining smaller buildings, they intend to establish a hospital. You are surprised, sir, to see me here,' added Koltshougin, " but what could I do ? We are all bearing a very heavy cross, and have been compelled by force to take it up."

XXIV

Tropinin passed behind the partition and gave the officer the required information, then he told him of Nakhodkin's suggestion. At first the French officer listened to him with an air of indifference, but as soon as he learned that Ilya could paint, he began to grow interested.

"In spite of your costume, I can see that you are an educated man, belonging to good society," he said delightedly. "Sit down, please, and don't look upon us as mere conquerors; you will see that we are truly anxious to resuscitate the country, and the food for the mind will be furnished by the theatre. I, who am talking to you, am a singer, actor, poet, all that you require, in a word, an artist." He fixed his dark caressing eyes upon Ilya, while a sad smile illumined his countenance.

"Yes," he continued, "in my youth, when I lived at Bordeaux, I acted not only in Molière's comedies, but also in Racine's drama. Happy, distant times! I assure you that there is much real talent among your artists here; all of them have not run away; we have already engaged a few quite passable artists. . . ." He mentioned a few merchants, an apothecary and two hairdressers of the Kousnetski bridge. "And Lamiral, your director of the ballet, he is very clever! He has

offered his services as stage manager and intends to organize several ballets, and then there is—but just a moment, I'll remember his name ; we dined with him and his charming wife the other day ! He has undertaken to supply everything we require for the theatre.

" Oh yes, I remember now ; he is a cloth merchant, Dancart is his name ; his signboard bears the coat of arms of the Emperor Alexander."

" But all these gentlemen," Ilya interrupted, " are your compatriots, Frenchmen."

" You mean to say," retorted the Frenchman, " that for a real Russian, though he speaks French like one of us, it would not be proper for him to participate in our pleasures ? " Isn't that it ? "

" Exactly," replied Ilya.

" Come, come, help us all the same."

" How ? "

" You can paint ? "

" Yes."

" That is all we want and, if you consent, you may tell me in your turn what I can do for you. " Charles Droz," he concluded politely, " at your service, Captain in the 17th, aide-de-camp on the general staff and, in his leisure hours, a lover of all that is beautiful, and of the theatre in particular."

" I am hungry, Monsieur Droz," said Ilya gloomily, " I have not tasted food since yesterday."

" Ah, mon Dieu," cried the captain, " and I ? but forgive me ! Come with me, we are both of us artists. What can we do ? It is the fate of war. I live quite near here ; I'll just finish this and be with you in an instant. And you, monsieur

Nikititsh," he said addressing the bookseller through the interpreter, " will you give M—— ? Tropinin, that is right ?—a decent pair of boots, and a coat from our depot ; I'll report it myself to the general."

Ilya was led into a tiny room packed with all sorts of things ; he was given a military coat, a cap, and a pair of new boots, which, no doubt, had been taken from some sacked shop. Outside he met Karpp.

" And I, batyoushka, Ilya Borissovitsh," asked Karpp, scarcely recognising Ilya in his new attire. " Will they allow me to leave here ? "

" Where do you want to go ? "

" I have just met a friend, we are going to dig up some potatoes and beetroot."

" Where ? I know very well where you intend to go and what you want to do, but take care ; don't let yourself be caught."

" May God punish me ! I assure you that we are going to the kitchen gardens, behind the barracks. We shall gather vegetables for these serpents, and may, perhaps, find a way to escape."

The officer returned and conducted Ilya through the inner apartments to a vast wing, which the fire had scarcely touched. These apartments were inhabited by the aides-de-camp of the chief of the secret service, as well as by the employés of the chancellery, and the various couriers, both foot and mounted. In the room adjoining that of the captain, a little grey-headed clerk, clad in a military coat, and with enormous glasses on his nose, was writing busily near the window.

" It is time to leave off work now, Pierre," said Droz kindly. " You can hardly see."

" Impossible, Captain," replaied the little clerk, " the machinery would stop ; the lists of the Prince of Erckmuhl have just come in."

" May one ask of what this work consists ? " asked Ilya.

The captain said a few words to his orderly and soon they were seated in front of a cold supper.

" Yes, my dear sir, the lot of a man at arms is often bitter, " said the captain with a sigh. " I have more than once cursed my destiny. To be a soldier when I am a born artist ! At present I am employed in making enquiries of all kinds. The names of the prisoners of Marshal Davout are contained in those lists."

" And what will become of these lists ? " queried Ilya, whilst Droz got out a bottle of wine from a cupboard and poured out a glass for his guest.

" They are sent to the general staff."

" And is that all ? "

" No, the chancellery of the marshal separates the inscribed upon the lists into two categories ; the one includes the names of mildly dangerous people whilst the other contains the names of those who are suspected of greater things."

" And what will be the fate of these unfortunate people ? "

" The first are inscribed as simply to be kept as prisoners or made to work, whilst against the names of the others, the marshal has written, with his own hand, the sentence ; to be shot, or to be hanged. War is not a joke ; I have written some verses on

this subject. Would you like me to read them to you ? " added the captain blushing.

" If you please."

Droz rose and extending his arm, gazed sadly at his guest as if imploring him to act as witness. In his sweet, ringing tenor voice, he recited an elegy on the nest of a linnet, robbed by a vulture. He himself somewhat resembled a linnet. Ilya was deeply moved by the verses and Droz's voice. The wine and the good meal had brought back the colour to his cheeks ; the handsome nose of the captain had grown slightly red, his eyes were sad. Pensive and silent he sat looking into space.

At this moment, the old clerk brought in the papers. The officer turned them over in his hands and sighed.

" Yes," he said, " it is a good handwriting, but what a work ! Have you in Russia such clever copyists ? " He showed Ilya the papers, and then carefully placed them on the window-sill, declaring that he would himself take them to the general.

" A glass of—you know—of the other ? " he said to the secretary, pointing with a deliberate air to a bottle of peppered brandy." " With such a handwriting, you ought to have been copying Beaumarchais or Chénier."

He handed him a glass of the liquor which he called " bouche de fer."

" Captain," said the flattered scribe. " I shall never forget your kindness."

He sipped the liquor and wiping his mouth with his sleeve, exclaimed : " This is a beverage fit for the gods ! To the fulfilment of your desires,

gentlemen, to those dear to your hearts!" and he left the room.

The captain, crumpled up in his chair, remained silent.

"Dear to our hearts," he repeated at last, shaking off his sad thoughts. "My family is far, far away —and yours, comrade? Are you married, by the way?"

"I do not know—yes, yes I am married," replied Tropinin, "my wife left Moscow two days before my arrest. God only knows what has become of her, whether she be alive or dead."

"She too fled then?" asked the astonished captain. "But why?"

"What about those lists?" exclaimed Ilya. "Suppose her name had been inscribed upon these lists in the beautiful handwriting of your secretary, perhaps, even among the suspicious persons! Your terrible marshal does not joke; you said it yourself; he might also have considered a woman as suspicious."

The captain blushed up to his ears.

"What an idea!" he exclaimed, "we are not Redskins after all. You need have no fear; women are sacred to us; I assure you that you will not find a single woman's name on those lists. But I have missed my vocation; I ought to have made the Fine Arts my career," and the captain, standing in front of the mirror, extended his hand and bulged out his chest, "Aren't these forms, plastic? They are not muscles, they are marble and steel. To-morrow I shall give you a letter to Lamiral and then you will embellish our theatre with your brush. We shall

not lack artists, you will see. Beside the charming Louisa Fusy, Burcé, and the noted comedian Sanvy, whom we found here, we have also a number of other amateurs. Then we have taken charge of the entire corps de ballet of one of your counts, Sheremete, I think is his name. But it is high time that we went to our rest ; you take my bed and I shall sleep upon this box."

" I am exceedingly obliged to you," said Ilya, " but that is more than I can accept. No, I cannot permit that."

" No compliments, cher colleague. We both of us serve the muses and besides, you are my guest. Make yourself comfortable. I must take these papers to the general, but first I shall look in at the chancellery. One cannot be sure of these people especially at the present moment. They have so gorged themselves with booty that they are not behaving themselves quite as irreproachably as usual."

XXV

THE officer left the room. Ilya heard his steps die away in the distance then he threw himself upon the papers left behind. " Have I the right to read them," he asked himself, " am I not committing perjury and betraying hospitality, but then they themselves—this war—— " and he began to peruse the lists rapidly, one after the other. One especially, written a few days previously, attracted his attention. Many names were accompanied by such words as "incendiaries," "brigands," "spies." Tropinin scanned the column, and then turned the page. Suddenly he received a shock ; he rubbed his eyes, read and re-read the words. Among the very suspicious persons, he distinctly read the words : " Lieutenant Perosski," and on the margin, " le déserteur de Smolensk," and another hand, evidently that of the terrible marshal, had added :" to be shot!" The blood rushed to Tropinin's head ; the papers fell from his hands ; the table the candle the bed which the captain had so generously offered him, all whirled and danced round him. Perovski, as the marshal had spelt the name, he felt sure was no other than Basil Perovski ; there could be no doubt of it. " But how on earth could he have been made a prisoner at Smolensk and escaped, when he wrote to us from Viazma ? There

must be some mistake, a fatal mistake that cries for vengeance." He wrung his hands not knowing what to do. Should he tell the captain that he had read the lists ? but he would only be angry and, moreover, would probably report the whole affair.

Droz returned : " What ? Are you still up ? " he cried. " Go to bed at once, otherwise I shall be offended.' He insisted that Tropinin should accept his bed. He then undressed, placed his head upon his folded coat, stretched himself upon the box, and blew out the light.

A little later, as the captain was not yet asleep, Ilya asked him : " Has it ever happened that a sentence passed by your terrible marshal has been commuted or not carried out ? "

The captain sighed and turned his face to the wall.

" Alas," he replied after a short silence," that is absolutely impossible with the Prince of Eckmuhl ; he himself writes the sentence after the examination. And who would dare to disobey him ? You ought to know, it is an open secret," he added, half aloud, " Davout is not a man, he is a tiger."

" Yet it is not possible," continued Ilya, endeavouring to clutch at some floating shadow of hope," it is not possible that all the sentences passed by your tiger-prince could be carried out at once ; one must verify, find sure data. Suppose the sentence had been passed in the morning, would not the execution be postponed until the evening, so as to have time to collect some proofs ? "

" What do you mean ? I don't understand you," said Droz.

" What I want to say is this ; " replied Ilya, " one of my own compatroits has been arrested at Moscow ; he is accused of being an escaped prisoner. It is an absolutely false accusation, I can assure you of that."

" When was he arrested, and of what is he accused ? "

" I do not know exactly when he was arrested, but I do know that he is accused of escaping. How can I explain all this to you ? They declare that he was made a prisoner at Smolensk, and then escaped. Now that is a lie, for until Borodino he was not taken prisoner. He is my friend, my comrade ; in the name of heaven, if he be still alive will you intercede on his behalf ? "

" But intercede with whom ? "

" With the Prince, with the Emperor himself."

" Ah, how little you seem to know us," exclaimed the captain, turning round. " To go to the Prince with such a request would be like asking a hyena to give up its prey. And the Emperor ? Do you know him ? No. Well then, listen to what I shall tell you here, where no one can hear us, but, you understand, that this is absolutely between ourselves. Recently when Berthier told him of some requirements of the soldiers, he exclaimed : ' Instead of talking to me about the soldiers, you had better speak to me of their horses.' Do you think that he would trouble himself about Davout's executions ? He has other things to think of."

The captain was silent for a while, and then continued :

" The Emperor would have done better to

remain in France, and to make art and literature flourish. But you see, he is afraid of peace; it would give the people time to think and criticise the Imperial régime; that is the reason why he so constantly launches himself into new wars. Besides, it is not for us, the small people, to criticise such a great man. In the meantime, while waiting for the moment when he will decide to return to a peaceful life, we shall amuse ourselves with our theatre, my dear colleague. To-morrow we shall give the grand army a little recreation, and a small souvenir of happier, far-off days."

"Still, should an opportunity present itself, and if it were no trouble to you, I beg of you to make enquiries about the fate of my friend."

"What is his name?" Tropinin told him.

"I shall do my best, mon cher. But in these days of storm and stress, there is a lot of work at headquarters, and sometimes no trace is left in writing." Having said this, Droz became silent. Soon Ilya heard his sonorous snoring. The brave captain was, no doubt, dreaming of France; he was on the stage of a little provincial theatre, fancying himself a Talma and little guessing that Bonaparte's conscription would make him a soldier and a staff officer, employed in the secret service enquiry department.

"Poor Basil," thought Tropinin, "your fate is settled. That is how your hero, your idol has rewarded you. Son of a grand seigneur, of a Cabinet minister, to die like this among incendiaries and brigands, to die unknown and no one able to save you! Poor Aurora! I wonder if she has any

presentiment of the fate awaiting her fiancée ?" Then he thought of his wife, of his dear home life, and tears choked him. He racked his brains to find some way of escaping and avoiding a fate similar to that of Basil.

When he woke in the morning, he saw that the captain was already dressed, and busy writing.

"Here is a letter for you," he said in a preoccupied tone ; "take it to Lamiral. I wish you all success and good luck. As for myself, to my great regret, I am ordered to go down and follow up some enquiry. Au revoir."

"Have you been able to learn anything about my friend Perovski ?" asked Ilya.

"I have made enquiries," replied Droz somewhat drily, "but—I could find no traces whatever ; there is such a lot to do, such a lot !" The Captain then left the room.

Tropinin got up, shaved himself with the assistance of the orderly, dressed and went to the Pozniakoff house in the Nikitskaja. Lamiral, the director was slightly drunk, he only spoke a few words to him, then took him to the stage, and without any preliminaries, told him to get to work on the scenery of an Italian villa. Tropinin put on an apron, took up his palette and brushes, and set to work. He worked the entire day without ceasing ; in the evening he was taken to where the actors and actresses were installed. Several times Ilya endeavoured to bring the conversation around to the fate of the prisoners, especially of those who had been sent to the Devitshe pole. The gaiety of the artists ceased at once. Lifting up their

eyes to heaven, they exclaimed : " It is infamous. People are daily shot and hanged without trial."

Droz came two or three times to examine his work, complimented Ilya, and then ceased coming. He had for a long time been attached to a Commission in the neighbourhood of the Soukharev tower. In the meantime, the scenery was nearing completion. Lamiral was busy rehearsing comic operas, pastoral plays with travesties, the genre preferred by Napoleon : " Martin et Fortin ; " " Les folies amoureuses ; " " Guerre ouverte." Lamiral emphatically told Tropinin that he was very pleased with his work. After this a ballet would be given and new scenery for it was required. Ilya worked again for some time. Under the pretext of supervising the arrangements, several of the great ones came to visit the ladies of the ballet, and to flirt with them. Murat was often among the visitors. Ilya saw Murat flirt with the dark-eyed dancer Lisa. Yet the girl's only reply to all the advances of the crowned Seladon was : " You large-eyed devil ! " as she clenched her fists. The King, not understanding her, merely smiled amiably.

Seeing that he was no longer suspected, Ilya ventured to ask permission to go and see Droz. His request was granted the more easily as Lamiral desired Droz's advice upon a theatrical matter. He therefore gave Ilya a letter and a safe-conduct to the Soukharev tower. The weather was cold. Tropinin met an Alsatian conscript. The little soldier, his gun on his shoulder, and his knapsack on his back, seemed very tired ; he constantly looked around him, as if he were trying to find his way.

They entered into conversation, and Ilya learned that the little soldier had left the Kremlin and was carrying some papers to Le Fortovo, where a French hospital had been established in the castle.

"And you, where are you going?" queried the small, blond, rosy-cheeked, dimpled Alsatian in his turn.

"I? I am also going this way," replied Tropinin after a moment's thought.

"That is splendid. It is much pleasanter to walk with someone, sir. As you see, I have lost my way, and am very tired; the horses are dying like flies and so we must go on foot. Are you from headquarters?"

"Yes, I am carrying a message like yourself."

"Your boots are newer than mine."

"I got them as a reward."

"We too, we need some new boots," remarked the soldier, as he sadly looked at his own footgear, attached to his feet by pieces of string.

The two new friends passed the Bassmannaja and, by way of German street, finally reached the Yaouza; night had fully fallen, when Ilya pointed out to his companion the lit-up windows of Le Fortovo. He knew that behind the castle, on the banks of the Sinitshka, was situated the cemetery of the town.

"Are you not coming in with me?" asked the soldier, mopping his perspiring brow. "I have been promised some of the broth and wine which they serve out to the convalescent patients; they are supposed to be excellent, especially when one is very tired."

" No, you had better accompany me as far as the church," replied Ilya. " Although I belong to the general staff I am unarmed so you can protect me against the marauders who, it seems, infest this neighbourhood."

" Willingly," replied the soldier, " It is strange, but I don't know where I am at all, and yet I have been here before. There used to be an artillery park here near the church, but now everything is so quiet and deserted ; it seems to me as if I saw it all for the first time. It is indeed lucky that I met you ; I am so shortsighted that I would have completely lost myself without you."

" It is precisely to the commander of the artillery corps of which you spoke, that I have been sent," tranquilly replied Ilya.

" Very well ; let us get along."

The soldier and Ilya walked towards the church of St. Peter and Paul ; a sentry stopped them.

" Where to ? "

" To the church house," replied Ilya.

" So late ? " grumbled the grenadier on horseback as he bent forward to examine them as well as he could in the darkness. " What are you doing in this deserted corner? There are Cossacks wandering around here and they will take away your weapons, if they do no worse to you."

" Have no fear, my friend, there are two of us," retorted Ilya with assurance, as he waded along in the sticky mud ; " they would not dare to attack us."

" But remember the watch ends here."

XXVI

The two pedestrians passed the hospital and reached the church gates; dead silence reigned here; the wind rustled in the tops of the birch trees.

"You had better go back now, my friend," said Ilya to the soldier. "I shall meet you at the hospital." However, he was busy asking himself whether he would not do wiser to take away the soldier's gun and kill him so as to have a better chance of escape.

"But where are you going," asked the astonished Alsatian, not seeing any trace of the artillery corps which he remembered having seen there. "Unless," he added laughingly, "your message is addressed to the dead."

"Should I kill him?" thought Ilya again. "If he suspects anything he will inform the sentries of the night watch."

The soldier had placed his gun on the ground, while he tied up his boot.

Ilya hestitated. "No," he said finally to himself, "continue on your way in peace, brave little Alsatian. God be with you." "What?" he said quickly to the young soldier, "don't you see the house yonder among the trees? The lights have been extinguished, the Commander is doubtless already asleep, but the sentries will be awake. As

soon as I have delivered my message, I shall run after you to try and catch you up."

"Au-revoir, then," said the soldier, "my eyesight is so bad that I often wonder why they accepted such a blind man as I am. Try and learn from the artillerymen whether we shall soon be allowed to return home; they might perhaps, know something. Take care also that a sentry does not shoot you."

"Thank you, I shall be careful."

The Alsatian retraced his steps. Ilya listened for a moment, passed the church, and crouching near the gate, listened again. The wind was alternately howling and calming; to the right and to the left, as far as the river bank, one could hear the shouts of the sentries. Over the city, the sky was red; a new fire had broken out somewhere.

"Shall I be lucky enough to pass through the chain of sentries," wondered Ilya; "will my desperate flight succeed? The soldier may be stopped and questioned about his companion. The sentry, seeing that I have deceived him, may give the alarm and then I shall be pursued. Quick, quick, I must get on."

He began to move onwards, creeping along the ground; then he started to run; he ran at random, stumbling over the uneven ground and falling into puddles; only when he felt himself sinking up to his knees in the mire, did he stop; he realised that he was on the bank of the Sinitshka; then he entered the high grass and lay quiet, determined to wait for the morning; his foot pained him again.

"Alas," he thought, "I shall not be able to escape. My hope was but an illusion. They will find me, take me back and then, who knows? perhaps the well business is already known. Good God, let me live for the sake of my orphaned family, and for your glory."

Thus more than an hour passed; the night seemed ever darker in contrast to the reflection of the fire; Tropinin fell into a heavy sleep; a pale white light appeared behind the bushes to his right: "Is it day?" he asked himself, waking up. Everything, however, was quiet and dark; it was but the moon rising and shedding its white light over the brook and the forest trees. Ilya remembered that the streamlet ran along the cemetery, then came the ravines, the forest and fields. "There is no time to be lost," he said, and quickly undressing, he made a bundle of his boots and clothes. He waded through the ice-cold water, carefully testing with his feet the marshy bottom, and safely reached the opposite bank. More than once he had stumbled and nearly lost his bundle. In the middle of the stream, the water had reached up to his chin, but then it again became shallow. Trembling all over, Ilya stepped on the other bank, dried himself as well as he could in the grass, dressed himself hastily and crept as far as the cemetery. The moon was just then clouded so he progressed very slowly; at last, he could see the crosses in the cemetery. He stopped then and considered what was best for him to do. The night had grown less dark, and the cries of the sentries had quite ceased. "I must get away

before daylight comes," thought Ilya. "I must reach the wood near here." He advanced a few steps then suddenly stood quite still, trembling all over; a slight rustling sound had attracted his attention.

There, standing quite near him, he saw a tall man in a torn cassock, who, seeing his military coat and French cap, seemed to be as frightened as himself and remained speechless for a few moments.

"Ultrum hostis an amicus es" he uttered at last in a trembling, bass voice. "Are you a friend or an enemy? Respice et parce, look and have mercy," he continued, pointing pitifully to a child sleeping in the grass at his feet.

"This is no doubt the priest of the cemetery; he takes me for a Frenchman," thought Ilya. "Have no fear, batyoushka," he added aloud: "I am a Russian like yourself, and as much to be pitied; my name is Ilya Tropinin."

"Mine is Savva Skvartzoff, deacon of Koudrin, and this is my little nephew," said the stranger. "What I have suffered can hardly be told. The brigands came, took away everything and burned down my house. Then I took this little orphan, who had been placed in my care, and left the town by way of the kitchen gardens. I was going to the convent Andronieff but I have lost my way. I pray to God that he will enable me to reach my people and place my little nephew in safety; then these monsters shall have cause to remember Savva.

"In which direction are you going, father deacon?"

"In the direction of Kolomna. I am going to

Ryazan: my family are in the district of Morshansk."

"Well then, let us lose no time! If you wish it, we can walk together; day is already breaking."

The fugitives entered the wood and marched on for a long time. Day found them in a glade near an abandoned forester's house. They stopped for a rest on the shore of a small lake situated in the very heart of the forest; the deacon had a few biscuits; here they rested until sunset, not moving for fear of encountering the enemy. Savva told Ilya that after he had terminated his studies at the seminary, he had been a chorister for several years at the Tshoudoff monastery; he had recently been married, had been consecrated deacon, and was awaiting his ordination as priest. Then the memory of his wife again plunged him into despair. He incessantly repeated that as soon as he had placed his little nephew in safety with his relations he would take up arms and go against the enemy; he would be accepted in the militia.

In the evening, the pedestrians resumed their journey. They walked all through the night and towards morning had the joy of hearing dogs barking; a little farther on, they saw a small village, but who lived there—friends or enemies? They came out on to the Vladimir road.

XXVII

Perovski, still standing in front of the terrible Davout, finally realised the importance to him of the words spoken by the Prince's aide-de-camp.

"This gentleman," Olivier was saying respectfully, "is much younger and shorter than the one of whom your Excellency is speaking; I remember him perfectly."

A ray of sunlight shone in Perovski's eyes. A heavy weight seemed to have fallen from his shoulders as if by enchantment; he breathed deeply, endeavouring not to lose a word from the lips of his unexpected defender. To Basil's utter surprise, the Marshal's face seemed to brighten and assume a less savage expression.

"Dawdling again, Olivier," he said as if anxious to shake off this impression. "Devil take you, one might think your mouth were full of pap!"

"The other prisoner," continued Olivier, in respectful and quiet tones, "was a head taller than this gentleman. He had wrinkles and a birthmark upon his cheek and walked with a swagger. If your Excellency doubts my words," he added in a trembling voice and growing pale, "I am ready to share the prisoner's fate."

"That will do," curtly said Davout. "I don't want your grandeur of soul. As for you," he

added, turning to Perovski, "you are saved by my subordinate; you may rejoin your companions."

For a few moments, Perovski remained immovable looking at Davout who seemed to be satisfied with his decision, and to be enjoying the prisoner's evident dismay. Then, without saluting or uttering a word, Basil staggered to the door; he could never say how he managed to join the other prisoners.

The Marshal's prisoners were lodged in a wing in which there were neither stoves nor flooring. As he neared it, Basil heard sounds of singing and a hubbub of voices. It was a motley crowd, of all sorts of people: merchants caught as they were leaving the city; valets; men of the people suspected of brigandage and incendiarism; two or three officials, military and churchmen. Perovski recognized Maxim, the house steward of Batashoff, who burst into tears when he saw him. To kill time and also to earn a few coppers, some of the prisoners busied themselves doing a little work for the French; if they were lucky, they then procured a little vodka and got drunk when they sang rather heart-breaking songs. Maxim, the merchants and the priests assumed a more dignified attitude. A sad silence prevailed among them; only at times they conversed in half whispers, wondering when the war and their captivity would come to an end. Basil learned that Napoleon, with the object of honouring the old believers, had visited the Preobrajenski hermitage. He had also summoned Obershalme, the milliner of the Dmitrovka and this *obershelma* (arch-rascal) as she was

called by the Moscovites, had had a conversation with the Emperor about the emancipation of the serfs.

Perovski thought that he would have to sleep on the bare floor in the corner assigned to him, but a tall young man with curly red hair, a joyous mien and great languishing eyes, came up to him and offered his services. His name was Senka Koudinitsh ; he had been valet to a Countess, and as a prisoner, was domiciled in the corner reserved for the men of the people. It was always Senka who intoned the songs taken up in chorus fashion by the others. Basil asked him to bring in some dry leaves and grass from the garden and, in the twinkling of an eye, Senka had made a couch for him. Grinning and showing his white teeth, he then said to Basil :

" Here is your *bondovar**, sir ; you only need your dressing gown and slippers. Your honour will sleep upon it as upon a feather bed." Then he swept the floor near and strewed some sand upon it.

Basil, in his turn, was able to render him a little service ; having learned that Senka was in love with Glasha, the Countess' chambermaid, he wrote her a letter for him. When he asked him how he hoped to forward the letter to his sweetheart, Senka replied as he slipped the letter into his boot, that their captivity could not last forever, that it would come to an end one day or other.

For four days, Perovski and the other prisoners without any escort, went out to the kitchen gardens

* *Boudoir.*

and gathered potatoes and other vegetables. They were also sent to the slaughter house where they helped the French to slaughter the cows, oxen and horses, useless for service, brought in by the purveyors of the Grand Army. During these expeditions, Koudinitsh amused his comrades with his jokes and songs. However, this did not last long ; the provisions were soon exhausted and then the prisoners only received biscuits and groats to eat. One day, about a fortnight after his arrival in the wing in Miliukoff's garden, Perovski noticed that an unusual commotion was taking place at Davout's headquarters The aides-de-camp seemed to be agitated, orderlies hurriedly crossed the yard, and men on horseback were riding away in a great hurry.

" We are going to start," said the prisoners joyfully, " Something has been decided with regard to us and we shall be taken to the outposts." On the 17th of September, they were called up and sent to the Dorogomilovki barrier whence, in batches of a hundred or more, they were taken to various districts of Moscow.

" Where are they taking us ? " the prisoners asked each other, only to receive the unvarying answer : " We don't know ! "

A portly general, on horseback, rode up, cast a worried look over the prisoners and made a gesture, when the drums began to roll. One portion of the escort walked in front of them, whilst the other followed them. Words of command were loudly spoken, and then the column started upon the old road to Smolensk.

"We are being taken to Mojaisk," said some of the prisoners, "Is it possible that the French are retreating?"

Some seemed quite satisfied whilst the others only sighed, remaining silent. Two Russian prisoners, driving in a carriage, invited the limping ones in turns to join them and have a rest. Basil had the good fortune to ride a few stages with them.

He congratulated himself although he was somewhat astonished at receiving the privilege. Some of the other prisoners, merchants or servants, who, because of their long beards were believed to be Cossacks, were also benevolently treated by their escort. This did not last however. At one halting place, a sergeant with a pock-marked face and arrayed in a woman's cloak, approached the carriage, took one of the officers by the hand, made him and his companion get out, and then quickly seated himself and one of his comrades in the carriage and never allowed the owners to enter it again.

They marched on and on; a piercing wind arose, accompanied by a cold, drizzling rain; the servants had by now lost their liveries and their plumes; all were dragging themselves along, clad in torn garments, wading through the frozen mud; the priests were now but half-frocked and Basil was shivering. Near a bridge, a sergeant politely invited him to sit down on the edge of the road and—still politely—made him take off his boots, which he then patted with a caressing hand and offered Basil his own torn footgear in exchange. Afraid of worse happening, he resignedly put them

on. Batashoff's house steward walked by his side ; his feet were wrapped up in pieces of rag.

" They have taken away your boots too ? " asked Perovski.

" Yes," replied Maxim in a tone of utter indiffernce.

" Look here, between you and me, it was you who set your house on fire, when Murat was lodging there ? "

Tho old man looked carefully around and then replied with a sigh : " Yes, it was I ! "

" And who told you to do it ? "

Maxim raised his hand and pointed to heaven. " It was He who put it into our heads ; besides Fedor Vassilievitsh Rostoptshin had summoned a few of us and told us secretly : ' When the enemy enter Moscow. . . . you understand, my friends ; begin with my own house in the Loubyanka,' and we have done what he told us ; we have burned, burned ! . . . ."

Frost succeeded the rain, and the road became covered with hard clods of mud ; the prisoners, exhausted, hungry, their feet bleeding and painful, lagged behind, often fell to the ground and only with the butt end of a gun could they be forced to rise. They stopped longer now at each halting place. The officers of the escort began to lose patience, so they commenced to kill off the sick and the crippled. Perovski noticed that these executions generally took place at sunrise when the column started on its march after the night's rest. The first time he had heard a few isolated shots from the back of the column, he had asked

a soldier what the shots meant. The Frenchman had shrugged his shoulders and replied: "It is the midnight soup of your compatriots." (Soupe de minuit de vos confréres.) Henceforth poor Basil shuddered every time he heard those shots and anxiously contemplated his bare feet, tied up in pieces of rag; he asked himself how long he would be able to walk and when the midnight soup would be his portion.

Frequently, during those hours of anguish, he took out the holy image which Aurora had given him and prayed fervently. At one halting place, he noticed that the shots were more numerous than usual, and this time, he could not refrain from remarking reproachfully to the chief of their escort: "How can you tolerate such barbarism, Captain? That you have taken away my boots, that my comrades have been deprived of their carriage is to be understood: it is the right of the strong—but what about these assassinations? Have they too been commanded?"

"It is the will of the Emperor," sadly replied the officer.

"But pray tell me, how can you explain such monstrous behaviour? The Indian cannibal who devours his helpless enemy. . . ."

"Listen," the Captain interrupted him sternly, "you had better take care; every one of you is exposed to such an accident." After a moment's pause, he continued: "You taunt us with our violence but it was you who started it; you were guilty first. Have you not set your towns and villages on fire? You have no hospitals, no doctors.

What do you expect us to do with your sick? Benevolently send them back to your own people, perhaps? At your service! You perfectly well understand that sick though they were, they would at once turn against us!"

Crouching on the frozen ground, during the cold and rainy nights, listening to the shots daily becoming more and more numerous, Perovski noticed with terror that his feet were gradually getting swollen; he was afraid to go to sleep at night in case his feet should freeze; when sleep was almost overpowering him, he would rise and pace up and down in order to get warm. The detachment had passed Mojaisk, and was now approaching Borodino. Here, but fifty days ago, Perovski had taken part in the great battle. Three months had scarcely elapsed since he had left the Novoselovka estate, so near him now; then his heart had been full of happiness and hope.

The frost had abated; the night was cold; a fierce wind howled and the rain poured down; prisoners and goalers alike were numbed and anxious to reach a halting place; they scrambled as best they could over the ruins of a burnt village, not far from a ravine where the corpses of men and horses lay in heaps.

"My God," cried the officer whose carriage had been taken from him, "we are in front of the battery of Raievski; I recognise the spot."

Basil remembered how he had seen Napoleon galloping here on his white horse surrounded by his suite. The soldiers had barely lain down when the trill of a joyful song broke out, to be immediately

greeted with a shout of unanimous laughter. It was burly Senka Koudinitsh who was singing :

" A barn owl is seated on a stove,
She flops her wings,
With her feet, she makes topp, topp,
And with her eyes, lopp, lopp."

Senka evidently accompanied his words with appropriate gestures, for the laughter continued in gusts.

Shuddering, Perovski listened to these jokings ; he took off the rags covering his feet, and saw that his legs were covered with sores, even wounds from the ankle to the knee. He was famished. That morning he had been lucky enough to find half of a rotten onion in the dust-heap of the village in which they had halted. " Lost ! I am lost !" he repeated to himself, indifferently looking at what was going on around him. The big sergeant who had taken away his boots, passed. He was now parading in a woman's short coat of hare-skin and a white silk muff hung from his neck by a ribbon. Followed by a few soldiers, armed with hatchets, he went across to the abandoned redoubt. Soon the sharp sounds of wood being chopped was heard.

" They are cutting off the legs of the dead." said Koudinitsh, smiling, as he sat down by the side of Perovski ; " they are taking off their boots."

" Well, what does it matter ? " replied Basil, as he wrapped up his legs again. " Once they are dead, it is all the same to them."

" Yes, but if there should be any living among them ? "

" Come, come, Senka," he answered wearily, "two months have passed since the battle."

" Well, only recently Broshka, the buffetier of Arkharoff, touched a dead man with his foot and he signed that he was alive. We gathered around him and asked him how he had managed to live all that time and he replied: " At night, I crept towards the dead and took the biscuits from their knapsacks and ate them."

" What did you do with him ? "

" With whom ? "

" Well, with this living-dead man ? "

" What could we do ? " replied Koudinitsh ; " he begged us to finish him but we had not the heart to do it. All our people cannot have left, someone will find him and take care of him."

XXVIII

When the prisoners reached Krasnoe, Perovski felt that his end was near. He was losing his strength, and he could only walk with difficulty: he could hardly understand how he walked at all. He was shaken with fever, and sometimes marched at the head of the column, and sometimes with those lagging at the rear. He was sure of but one thing: he was going to die. The French had just shot a few more, night was falling, and Perovski was marching along, almost unconsciously. He looked at the willows lining the road, and in delirious horror, asked himself which was the tree at whose foot he would fall exhausted, and be mercilessly shot down.

"Sir," whispered the familiar voice of Koudinitsh in his ear, "you are quite done up and so am I. As I have decided to try and escape, you may have my *laptis*, I no longer require them."

"Your laptis! and yourself—consider! Besides, do you think this is the moment to attempt an escape? If they should retake you, they would shoot you."

"It means death in any case, sir," replied Koudinitsh, "and one must try to live as long as death does not come to one: you cannot escape death when it does come. If God will come to my

assistance, I shall be able to escape as well in your footgear as in my laptis. They are only laptis outside, inside they are *velenkis* (felt shoes) and are very comfortable. But here we are at our resting place.."

The prisoners halted on the outskirts of a wood : Koudinitsh sat quickly down and took off his laptis.

" Take these as a remembrance of Senka," he said offering them to Perovski .

" Think what you are doing, my boy," said Basil. " You surely have a father, a mother ; you might still be able to see them one day, whilst now. . . . "

" I am only a poor devil, sir ; an orphan, and what I have once taken into my head, I usually do. . "

" But consider the matter, I tell you. So many eyes are watching you ; you will certainly be caught.

" Yes, perhaps, but sometimes the hatchet when chopping the wood meets a knot," said Koudinitsh in a mysterious tone, as he looked around him " You will see. As for the laptis, Glasha gave them to me as a present when she left Moscow with her mistress. The French took away my boots, and I have walked all this way in these laptis ; you too will be able to continue your march in them."

Perovski no longer resisted. Senka helped him to put on the laptis, which were large and soft, and gave him a delightful sense of well-being. He did not even go to fetch his food at the common cauldron, but stretched himself on a sheltered slope among his shivering companions and soon fell asleep thinking of Senka. " He too is in love," he thought. The dark night, the redoubt with its

abandoned corpses, the escort and the ravine all disappeared from his vision. Once more he saw a cloudless summer sky, and walked with Aurora on the soft green grass in a flower-carpeted glade and a lark sang gaily in the azure sky above. "Do you pray to the Virgin whose image I gave you?" suddenly asked Aurora. He opened his uniform and searched for the image, but could not find it. His hands convulsively touched his breast, searched through his old garments, his worn-out coat, but there was nothing. Embarrassed, not daring to look Aurora in the face, he wondered where he could have left the image that she had given to him. Could he have lost it? Aurora still waited, gazing at him attentively.

Someone pulled him roughly, and a curt word of command sounded in his ears. He opened his eyes, and saw the sergeant in the woman's fur coat and the white muff; day was breaking; it was raining again, and the roll-call of the prisoners had begun.

"Get up," repeated the sergeant, shaking Perovski; "What a sleeper!"

Basil got up. He saw the detachment drawn up, all ready for the march. The first lines had barely entered the wood when a shot, followed by several others, resounded among the trees. Basil shuddered, surprised to hear the well-known shots fired at the head of the column instead of in the rear. In the pale light of the morning, he perceived an agitated group on the outskirts of the wood; a portion of the escort, abandoning their prisoners, were pursuing something in the forest, whilst others were gazing

at a dark object stretched in a ditch by the roadside. Shouts were raised, the detachment stopped; everyone talked, gesticulated, but no one seemed to know exactly what had happened. At last they learned that one of the prisoners, Koudinitsh, had snatched the gun from the nearest soldier, thrown himself into the thicket and defended himself with the butt of the gun. The sergeant with the muff was the first to regain control of himself; he gave orders to fire at the fugitive; shots rang out, then Senka stopped and, taking aim through the branches, fired and hit the sergeant. With fixed bayonets, the soldiers rushed after him. Tall and agile, his feet wrapped up in Basil's rags, Senka ran on like a hare; he jumped over ditches and bushes and was soon lost in the depth of the wood. His pursuers fired a few more shots at random, then, persuaded that he had been hit and was grievously wounded, they retraced their steps. This happened near Viazma.

The detachment, ever diminishing in number, at last arrived at Smolensk and wended its way towards Vitcsk. Snow fell, and the road became almost impracticable. Subjected to unheard of sufferings, the first column crossed the frontier during a terrible snowstorm with the temperature at 20 degrees. Thanks to the felt shoes with which Senka had presented him, Perovski was able to bear the cold and the fatigue of the march.

"Koudinitsh, Koudinitsh," he thought, "good and generous Russian soul, you have saved my life; and you, are you still among the living? If you have really been wounded, may God help you. He

will reward you for what you have done for me, giving me a chance to fight, to suffer but also to hope."

In Poland, the prisoners were placed in carts; they traversed Prussia in closed carriages but were starved. In Prussia, Perovski became ill; ague was followed by fever, and he passed two months in a hospital. His health only returned with the Spring. The wife and daughter of the doctor brought him flowers; he burst into tears when he saw them. "Aurora, Aurora," he thought, as he looked at the flowers, and the sun, "where are you? Shall we ever meet again?"

XXIX

Princess Anna Arcadievna Shelespanskaja had left Moscow two days before the arrival of the French. She found the journey very exhausting, so frequently caused her carriages to stop and the tents to be pitched, or rested at an inn ; at last she reached Yartzovo, her estate in the government of Kolomna, on the way to Panshino, her estate in the province of Tamboff. At every ravine, every hillock, the Princess had cried : " Stop ! Stop ! I can go no further," and promptly descended from her carriage. Xenia Valerianovna awaited her grandmother at Panshino. Yartzovo was only ninety versts distant from Moscow, and about twenty from Kolomna. On the eve of the day following her departure, when already in sight of Yartzovo, the travellers perceived the red glare of fire over Moscow. Aurora was the first to say : " Grandmother, Moscow is burning ! " The carriage stopped, and everyone ventured upon some conjecture, but doubt was impossible. Moscow was in flames, probably set on fire by the French, who had taken the city.

The Princess nearly fainted when she heard this news, and, on her arrival at Yartzovo, declared that she would stay there a short time to rest. Maremiasha, Yefimovna and the other servants were there waiting for her.

"The French are retreating," said the Princess. "It is far from here to where the French are, and besides, Kutuzoff is on guard."

Thanks to Aurora's and Maremiasha's efforts, the house was put in order and everything was arranged to suit the Princess' mode of life. Kolomna was almost deserted but whatever provisions were found there were bought; a doctor was also located who promised to visit the patient daily. The numerous servants brought by the Princess from Moscow, her buffetiers, cooks, hairdressers, chambermaids, etc., were all lodged as well as was possible in the wings and izbas. When the boxes were opened, Aurora found the glass bed, with its silken cushions and covers, and she placed it in the bedroom of the Princess. When the latter saw the portrait of Napoleon woven in silk, she became very angry, and ordered it to be hung up in the drawing room with this inscription beheath it: "Murderer and Blackguard." (Assassin et scélérat.)

Life at Yartzovo gradually fell into the ordinary groove of the life the Princess had led at Moscow. The morning was consecrated to the dressing table, to the favourites Limka, Timka and Tutik; then Aurora came into her grandmother's room and read aloud to her. In the evening, at the tea table, she read again, or Maremiasha and Yefimovna, busy with their knitting, came to tell her what they had heard from the starosta or others. The Princess listened and played patience. In the anteroom, the servants played cards; the chambermaids sang in chorus, and sometimes Vlass accom-

panied them with his bass voice, or the little negro boy, Varlashka, with his baritone. After supper, everyone went to bed.

It was impossible to obtain any news of the war, although its theatre was so near. Only the doctor and the marshal of nobility from Kolomna occasionally brought in some news which they had read in the newspapers. In the peaceful country with the moujiks busy at their usual work, one could easily imagine that the dreadful plague of war that had fallen upon Russia, raged miles and miles away, far in the depths of the immense empire: it was difficult to realise that it was raging but eighty versts from them. It all revolted Aurora, just as the ballets and operas, presented at Moscow on the eve of the entry of the French, had revolted her. The weather from the middle to the end of September was bright, mild and dry. The foliage of the birch trees had turned from green to red and golden yellow, those wonderful shades of late autumn. The work in the fields went on peacefully. The winter corn was sown, and the ground was being prepared for the summer corn; it was the time, too, for repairing the izbas, and gathering in the vegetables. The men went to the markets or worked in the woods, whilst the old people, men and women alike, who had not seen the Princess for a long time, came to visit her in the evenings; they brought her presents of hens, eggs, mushrooms, and, in exchange, asked for all sorts of things: permission to cut wood in the reserved part of the forest; a loan of oats or rye, or they begged the Princess to buy some of their handiwork, such as

homespun cloth or linen. Others appealed to Aurora to listen to their various troubles and differences, and to judge between them, and put an end to their quarrels about some geese, or maybe, swine. She patiently listened to them without, however, being able to understand that people should trouble about such trifling matters at a time like that.

In her anguish and worry over the issue of the war and the fate of her fiancée, she sought consolation in long, solitary rides. She would have Barss saddled in the evenings, and would gallop through the forest and fields until night fell. The great deeds of the Russian army at Borodino, the wound and death of Bagration, the little news they received of the war, seemed to trouble the life at Yarzovo not in the slightest ; this greatly dismayed Aurora. At first, the newspapers arrived very much delayed, and then they ceased, so that had it not been for the red sky over Moscow, one might have thought that the war really was over. But the red glare of the fire was still reflected over the city. From her own room Aurora contemplated the red glare in the sky, and shuddered. The torturing thought of all the misfortunes and sufferings of which the fire was to her a symbol, prevented her sleeping. But none of it either troubled or moved the peasants out of their quiet calm.

The starosta told Maremiasha and then Aurora of a new rumour that was spreading through the country. A project had been promulgated among the peasants by means of leaflets printed in French. At first they had discussed it in whispers, but now

they were speaking of it openly. These leaflets declared that the peasants were now free and emancipated. They announced that the Emperor Alexander was expected shortly at Vladimir and later at Kolomna. He intended to deport certain of the seigneurs to Kazan, and others were to be sent to various other towns, where they would have to "write papers," whilst the land, the forests and the houses would be divided among the moujiks. These rumours were believed and resulted in the peasants becoming rude and disobedient; they refused to listen to the managers and starostas. They not only refused to work for the seigneurs, but even pillaged the possessions of certain of them and, here and there, a manor house was set on fire.

"Call the peasants together," said Aurora bravely, "I shall speak to them; our moujiks are the victims of wicked people who are trying to turn their heads and pervert their common sense."

"What an idea, Mademoiselle," exclaimed the starosta. "You must not think of such a thing. Our people are quite quiet. You will only put ideas into their heads; better leave them alone. They will gossip and gossip, and then everything will quiet down."

Aurora considered it to be her duty to tell her grandmother of the matter; the old lady was so upset that she had to take to her bed. The girl sent an express messenger to Panshino. Ilya must have returned, she thought; he will come and put things straight here. But Xenia arrived alone with her child; she had changed greatly. Instead

of bringing courage and hope, new trouble and grief came with her, for then, for the first time, they learned that she had had no news whatever of her husband. She trembled at the thought that he had not been able to leave Moscow in time, and had therefore been made a prisoner. The sisters shared their fears and wept together. But above all, they had to endeavour to soothe and tranquillize their poor grandmother, for the old lady was quite inconsolable.

"My God," she cried, "why am I so unfortunate. I am only a burden to myself and to all of you. And now my cough has begun to trouble me again. Oh, how I wish that I could be taken quickly to Panshino so as to get away from here."

"Don't think of it, grandmother," said Xenia, "You have no idea how things are at Panshino; it is much worse than at Yartzovo. Here at least we are near the town, we have the doctor and can sometimes hear a little news from Moscow, while there, it is a desert. The peasants are also agitated but here, at least, we are near the army, whilst out there at Panshino, we would only have the ispravnik and his invalids."

Aurora agreed with her sister. The Princess at last yielded and, whilst playing patience, consoled herself with the thought that this state of affairs could not last very much longer. A decisive battle would soon be fought. Who would be victorious, she could not say, but in any case peace would soon follow upon it, and then they could return to Moscow. Of course, the enemy might have sacked the house, but luckily the most valuable

things had been removed, and then the house itself would be there ; it could not have been burnt down.

Thus a few days passed. One evening, Aurora was called out to the perron. Yefimovna, crying bitterly, told her that the starosta from Novoselovka had just arrived.

" Where has he come from ? " said Aurora, for she knew that Novoselovka had been burned down.

" The French compelled him with others to carry the wounded to Moscow, said Arina ; " He has escaped from them."

" Call him here quickly, nurse," cried the young girl.

" There he is," replied Arina.

The starosta then emerged from the shadow ; his head was wrapped up in bandages ; his clothes were torn, he was barefooted. Maremiasha stood crying behind Aurora.

" Did you stay long at Moscow ? " asked Aurora.

" All the time, Mademoiselle. The accursed Herods put us to all kinds of drudgery ; we had to drag those people as if we were beasts of burden ; we chopped wood, dug up potatoes, carried water, and ground flour with handmills."

" But as a reward, you are now the subjects of Bonaparte," said Yefimovna as she spat angrily.

" Did you hear anything of Vassili Alexievitsh Perovski ? " queried the young girl.

" How could we get any news, dear lady ? The enemy oppressed us, overwhelmed us, utterly exhausted us. Some of us were put to death for disobedience ; I managed to escape."

" Did you go to the Patriarchal Ponds, Klimm ? Did you see our house ? " asked Aurora.

" The brigands sent us to Priesnia ; on the way we passed your quarter but neither the Bronnaja, the houses near the ponds, the Nikitskaja, nor the Arbatt exist any more ; everything has been burned to the ground."

Aurora looked at Maremiasha ; she was drying her tears. " And grandmother's house ? " asked Aurora.

" Everything is gone ; there are only ashes left," replied Klimm. " It was there that my pal and I decided to attempt to escape."

" And you managed it ? "

" Alas ! The cursed Frenchmen caught us on the Orloff meadow, and from that time I was kept under lock and key. We went to work, accompanied by an escort. But God came to our aid. One day, carrying pails and shovels, we went to a well whose water is excellent, but people had trampled around it so much that it had become quite unapproachable because of the mire. There were about ten of us, and the escort consisted of four soldiers. We were worn out, starving and suffering ; we could hardly drag our feet after us. The sun had already set, and the place was quite deserted . . . The French were drunk and rather gay. We had planned everything beforehand ; it was Kornyoushka's idea. Well, after all, why should we have suffered so much ? Once arrived at the well, we caught each other's eyes, and then suddenly seized the four soldiers and hurled them one after the other into the well, together with their guns ; then we threw

earth over it with our shovels, and ran away into the wood near the kitchen gardens."

"What? You buried them alive?" cried Aurora shuddering.

"Certainly," retorted Klimm. "You should have heard them jabbering in their gibberish when we were throwing the earth down upon them. God will have forgiven them," concluded the starosta, looking up to heaven and making the sign of the cross.

XXX

THE two sisters carefully kept the news that the Moscow house had been burnt from their grandmother. Klimm, they sent to Panshino. Night and day, they fervently prayed to God to grant Basil and Ilya the strength to bear the terrible hardships which, there was little doubt, they were suffering. Were they even alive? They trembled at the very thought and once, in an unguarded moment, Aurora said: "And if Basil were dead." . . . She could not continue but thought: "Then life would be over for me, and I know what I should have to do."

One day, Aurora and Xenia went to church at the neighbouring village of Tshapligino, which belonged to the Pissareffs. After mass, they heard the appeal of the Holy Synod to the people, and the prayers for the defence of the country and the holy orthodox religion against the invader, read by the old priest, with a profound feeling of piety and patriotism. The Russian people were called upon to fight the Gauls without truce or mercy. Russia was compared to God-fearing and peaceful David, and Napoleon to the arrogant and inhuman Goliath. "Where is this David, the saviour of our country?" Aurora asked herself amidst her tears as she looked round at the moujiks crowding the church who

yet seemed to care so little for the national calamity, for the terrible war, who indeed, on the contrary, expected it to result in some new and unknown happiness for themselves. Aurora reflected that David, although a shepherd, was also a poet and that only fine natures were capable of understanding, of feeling deep in their hearts, that love for one's native land that made one feel the passionate necessity to avenge its honour. "If Basil has fallen, as so many brave men have been mowed down by the scythe of pitiless death, who will avenge his sufferings and his death; who will call the oppressor before the supreme judge?"

When the service was over, the priest approached Aurora and Xenia and invited them to enter his house. They knew the clergyman's wife who frequently came to see their grandmother, so they accepted the invitation. Tea was served and they talked. The clergyman did his best to console and reassure the sisters. Bonaparte would soon beg for peace and then all the prisoners would be exchanged.

"But where is Bonaparte at present?" asked Xenia.

"Wherever he is," replied the priest, "the hand of justice will reach him; he is trapped, and, like a lion, is pacing up and down in his cage. The robbers and plunderers will derive no benefit from their spoils. Our army is intact, holding its positions, whilst the French army is dwindling away and disappearing slowly day by day, like wax before the flame."

The sisters eagerly listened to his words.

"And what tears and losses!" said the clergyman's wife in her turn; "Some families have lost millions. And the drudgery! It is killing, martyrising the prisoners!"

"Not all of them are being martyrised or killed," her husband interrupted her, signalling to her the while to be quiet; "a good many have escaped. The miller of Zaraisk told me recently that Prince Dmitri Galytzin carried his friend Sokovnin, who was ill, away in his arms. The French were already in possession of Moscow, there were no carriages, so he had to walk. When they reached the barriers, the Prince took his friend upon his shoulders and carried him to our rearguards. Oh, there are a good many acts of courage, glorious deeds to be told. Rostoptshin set fire to his estate, Voronovo, after nailing on the gate, this inscription: "I am burning everything that no Frenchman may pass over the threshold of my house!"

"He was uncle Peter's neighbour," said Xenia to her sister.

"You have an uncle," asked the priest.

"Yes, Peter Andreievitsh Kramalin; we are Kramalins on our father's side."

"And what does your uncle write to you? Our entire army is in the neighbourhood of Serpukhoff."

"He is often ill and so does not write to us very often. His last letter to us was addressed to Panshino."

Aurora listened to this converstaion and thought: "Those who came as far as Moscow were able to leave but Basil: perhaps he remained at Borodino; did he too, like Sokovnin, find a friend ready to save

him ? " However, despite her doubts and tormenting fears, she still cherished a secret hope as to the fate of her fiancé. " He has been saved and I shall see him again. He cannot die." The sisters returned home. The weather was beautiful. Xenia, anxious to enjoy it and also to divert Aurora from her gloomy brooding, sent the carriage on in advance and suggested that they should walk home. Soft, light transparent clouds sailed across the azure sky ; crows, croaking gaily to each other, fluttered from tree to tree ; spiders spun their webs in the warm air, and the dogs in the village were barking loudly.

Aurora suddenly seized her sister's hand, " Look Look ! " she cried. She had seen a little girl hurrying along on the outskirts of the wood.

" Well, what is it," replied Xenia, blushing and a prey to some inexplicable emotion ; " the child must have gone out to pick mushrooms ; the forest guard has seen her, and she is now running away."

" No, No, Xenia, Look ! Look ! She is coming straight to us. Don't you see ? "

" How odd you are ! " said Xenia, making an effort to remain calm ; " You see something extraordinary in every little thing. . . . "

" But stop, don't you see that she is signalling to us to wait for her ? "

Xenia stopped at last. The child came running up, lifting her arms as she came. She disappeared for an instant, hidden by the curve of the road but then emerged again on a hillock ; they could hear the hurried tapping of her bare little feet.

" It is Fenia, Yefimovna's niece," said Xenia

gleefully, "something must have happened at home."

Aurora, white as her dress, did not take her eyes away from the child.

"Do you want me?" she asked, hastening to meet Fenia.

"Why should it be she rather than I?" thought Xenia, feeling a little annoyed. "Why should she be luckier than I?" but the next moment she thought: "Oh, how shamefully envious I am! May God be with her!"

"The deacon! The deacon!" cried Aurora joyfully to her sister who looked at her in amazement.

"Which deacon?" asked Xenia breathlessly.

"They have both escaped from Moscow, both of them" cried Aurora, almost beside herself with joy as she danced and kissed her sister and shook and kissed the flushed and dishevelled Fenia.

"But where is this deacon, and with whom has he escaped?" asked Xenia.

"At Yartzovo, at the house," replied Aurora, laughing and crying at the same time as she clasped her hands. "Peasants met them and brought them home. Yefimovna was the first to think of us, and then she sent Fenia. The other is still in town."

"Who is in town, who?" asked Xenia turning to the child.

"The gentleman."

"What gentleman?"

"I do not know."

XXXI.

THE sisters ran on; they passed the park, the village and, scarcely able to breathe, entered the house through the back entrance.

"Where is he? Where is the deacon?" asked Xenia, crossing the ante-room like a whirlwind.

"Here," said Yefimovna beaming and pointing to the Princess' bedroom.

Xenia stood still, one hand pressed to her breast. "Who may this deacon be?" thought Aurora holding the handle of the door. "Is it possible? Oh, God grant that Basil has returned with him!" The door opened and Aurora stood as if rooted upon the threshold. Near the bed of the Princess, by the side of a priest in a cassock, sat a bearded man dressed in a sheepskin and wearing top boots. Aurora did not recognise him. Silence feel upon the room; the two sisters were not expected back so soon.

"Why are they all so silent? Why do they all look at me so?" thought Xenia. "Terrible news must have arrived. They are anxious to prepare me for it: Ilyoushka has been killed—he is dead?" The decision to which she had come during the last few days not to survive him, again crossed her mind; she saw the deep chasm beyond the garden, the well-known path leading to it; the steep bank of the

river. "I have nothing to live for," she thought. At this moment she felt something touch her shoulder. She shivered and raised her head. It was her child stretching out its little arms to her. The nurse was holding Kolia before her; he was only half-awake, his bonnet was awry on his little head, his face was pink and flushed with sleep. Behind the child she saw another face with eyes smiling in happiness. "Who is it? Who?" she asked herself, then uttered a piercing shriek. Almost distracted, she threw herself into her husband's arms, covered the pale face with kisses and repeated joyfully: "Ilyoushka! Ilyoushka!" All wept for sheer joy.

"Oh, Xenitshka, Xenia," said Aurora, wiping her tears away, "how happy you are, and how you deserve your happiness."

Tropinin gazed at her somewhat sadly; she felt a vague dread creep over her. Had he any fatal, painful news for her? They talked all together for some time in the Princess's room; questions were asked, answered; suppositions made and discussed. Dinner was served there and later, tea. A Russian vapour bath was prepared for the two guests, but the deacon refused to avail himself of it.

"How can one think of luxuries that rejoice the flesh when the soul is suffering and is being torn asunder?" he said.

At the request of the Princess, he related the story of his misfortunes and his flight from Moscow. Partly on foot and partly with hired horses, the travellers had reached Panshino where Klimm told them that the family were staying at Yartzovo.

Hither they hurried but their *tarantass** had broken down on the road and then the peasants of the neighbourhood had brought them here. Aurora sat down by the side of the deacon.

" Where is the nephew you saved ? " she asked.

" I left him at Kolomna with his godfather who is a chorister;"

" Do you also come from there ? "

" No, I come from Serpukhoff ; my father and mother have been dead many years now, but my wife's brother keeps an inn in a village near ; I think that I shall stay there for a time ; it is this side of Serpukhoff, just beyond Kashira,"

" It is time for the travellers to rest," said the Princess when Ilya had returned from his bath. Everyone got up to say good-night. Aurora joined her brother-in-law :

" And Basil ? " she queried," why don't you tell me about him ? It is impossible that you should know nothing whatever about him."

" But my dear sister, what an idea ! " replied Ilya. " Where and how could I have heard any news of him ? I was among the early prisoners and there were so many, and kept in so many different places. Don't worry ; I feel sure Basil is safe, and that you will see him soon again."

* A small Russian carriage.

XXXII

"No, no he knows something that he is hiding from me," Aurora repeated to herself; "my sister's husband has come back to her; the child has found its father; they are now re-united, and I dare not envy them their happiness, but what will become of me?" She retired to her room when these black thoughts crowded and beat upon her brain. Unable to sleep, she opened her window; silence reigned over the house; the night, though moonless, was clear and beautiful. Throwing a shawl over her head, she went out for a stroll in the fresh night air. The idea that she was now alone in the world haunted her; she felt that everything was passing just in front of her, but that she could not stretch out her hand and grasp at anything. Her memory brought back to her her past life, and the three principal events in it; the death of her mother, her departure from the paternal roof, and her farewell to her fiancée. She felt that she had not the strength to fight and struggle against her fate; she believed herself doomed to suffering, to a cruel and fatal destiny. She remembered her childhood, her terror and tears at the sight of her mother's coffin; her cries: "Mamma, Mamma, get up, speak to me." Then she thought of her father, of the day when she and her sister first entered the institute:

then too, she had had a presentiment that she was seeing him før the last time. In her mind, she went over all the little incidents of last spring ; her first meeting with Perovski, her engagement, their last interview, his departure from Moscow. "How much has happened since then ! And what new sorrows ! " she exclaimed. She contemplated the sky all aglow in the distance by the reflection of the fire. And she remembered the comparison her fiancée had made during their last ride together, when Moscow had seemed to him as if bathed in an ocean of fire, and the churches and steeples looked like so many shipmasts in flames. " It all seems to have been realised as if it had been a prophecy," she said to herself. She walked down to the end of the garden, bending her head beneath the branches, and following the path that skirted the river A horse neighed in the stable. " It is Barss," she said half-aloud, " I forgot to give him his ration of sugar to-day ; what will he think of me ? " Then she remembered her uncle Peter, the little countryhouse, her old white horse, and her hunting expeditions. Oh, how she would like to see that uncle, and to re-live the past with him.

She looked up at the house ; but one window was feebly lit ; it was the night-light burning in the nursery, little Kolia's room. " It is time to go in," she said, " everyone is asleep." And yet she hesitated, death appeared so attractive, and the river was so near. She sat down on a bench underneath the lime trees, where she often came to look towards Moscow. Soon she fancied she heard voices ; she was not mistaken ; her sister and brother-in-law

were talking at the open window, and involuntarily she listened :

" But it would have been madness, sheer madness," Tropinin was saying. " How could you have come to such a decision, you a good Christian, and a tender and devoted mother ? "

" I came to that decision almost involuntarily, even against my will," replied Xenia. " Had you not returned, had I learned that you were dead, I swear to you that I should have thrown myself into the chasm, and our family would have had one more death to mourn."

The barking of the dogs prevented Aurora hearing her sister's concluding words. " One more death to mourn," she repeated : " Mitila Oussoff is dead, but who is the other ? " She tried to listen ; she felt almost as if turned to stone ; the cold was affecting her.

" They were not married, but still what a tragedy," Tropinin was speaking again ; " I have always said. . . . ."

The dogs again started barking, and poor Aurora could not hear.

" Are you sure ? " asked Xenia.

" I saw the lists ; I don't know the result, but it is always the same ! "

" Is it really possible that the marshal should, without any trial, any sentence. . . ."

Everything had again become still, but Aurora was no longer listening. Pressing her hands to her breast, she went away, swaying, then suddenly started to run towards the house. Groping in the dark, she entered her room, threw herself upon the

bed, and hiding her face in her pillows, cried for a long time, utterly crushed in her despair.

"What is to become of me now?" she thought; "Shall I remain in the common groove of life, put on mourning, be courted by some ordinary good man, allow myself to be married off? Adieu, my beautiful dreams, adieu, my well-beloved!"

It was bright day when the house awoke. Tea was served, but Aurora's room still remained locked. Stesha, the chambermaid, peeped through the keyhole, and saw that her mistress was not yet up; she must have been reading late last night. They did not want to wake her.

"Let her sleep, poor child," said Xenia, when she came down to breakfast with her husband.

The Princess came down in very good humour; "Ilyoushka has come back, now Aurora's fiancée will be here too shortly—very shortly," she said. Tropinin read aloud the news which the post had brought them in letters and papers. Then Aurora came down, paler than usual, and with her lips tightly pressed together. Her eyes seemed to glisten with some secret resolution; she seemed a different person from yesterday. She listened, questioned, replied, but her eyes seemed lost in the distance, in some mysterious unknown; she seemed hardly aware of what was going on about her. The deacon told the Princess how God had miraculously saved the Trinity convent of St. Sergius. Three times the French were on the point of sacking it, and three times a thick mist had hidden it from their view.

"Is it our people who are guarding the road to Kaluga?" asked Aurora, turning to Ilya.

"Yes," replied Tropinin. "They say that Napoleon sent proposals of peace to Kutuzuff, but that the Prince pretended to be decrepit and an invalid. He is supposed to have cried and said: 'Do you see my tears? All my hopes are placed in Napoleon but,' he added, 'it is quite impossible to think of peace, as yet, the war has only just begun.'"

Aurora helped her sister to clear away the breakfast cups, and then, when Xenia had left the room with her husband and the deacon had gone to make ready for his departure, she proposed to her grandmother that they continue their reading of the novel "Adèle et Theodore." She seemed quite calm and remained so the whole day.

"Aurora is marvellous," said Xenia; "what force of character to bear her sorrow like that, but oh, how would she be if she knew the truth!"

The deacon came the next morning to thank the Princess who had generously provided him with money and provisions for his journey; they gave him horses for as far as Kashira. The *kibitka* was waiting for him at the perron, when Aurora sent Yefimovna to bring him up to her room.

"You are going to Kashira, father deacon?" she said.

"Certainly, Mademoiselle; I cannot miss it."

"Will you have the goodness to post these two letters for me?"

"With pleasure," then glancing at the addresses on the envelope, he added, "one of these letters is for your uncle, and the other to a cabinet minister. What a great person you are writing to?"

"My fiancée Perovski is the minister's ward,"

she replied. "Surely Ilya Borissovith must have told you about it. The Count is perhaps ignorant of his fate, and could, perhaps, help him with his influence, and through his connections, then. . ." but tears choked her voice.

"Console yourself, Mademoiselle, these letters shall be posted without fail."

"That is not all, that is not all," continued Aurora, drying her tears. "I want you to reply frankly to a question."

"I shall do so conscientiously."

"You have talked a great deal to my brother-in-law during your journey. Tell me, is Perovski alive?"

Savva was embarrassed and remained silent.

"I shall facilitate your reply. Perovski was made a prisoner, was condemned to death, and his name was inscribed on the lists. I know all that. Tell me only, is he dead or alive?"

"If you know all that, Mademoiselle, what more can I tell, I, small and feeble of mind? I swear to you by the God Almighty, that I know no more."

Aurora sat motionless; tears streamed down her pale face. "Lost! lost," she said at last, raising her eyes to the holy images; "all is finished for me. But one thing remains to be done. My uncle lives in the neighbourhood of Serpukhoff; will you please call on him and deliver my letter to him personally?"

"You may rest assured that I will."

A week passed; September was approaching its end. The Princess, completely recovered, declared her intention, now that Ilya was with them, to go

to Panshino while the fine weather lasted. There was no time to be lost, the French might arrive at any moment. No one objected. The decisions of the old Princess permitted of no appeal. Everything was again packed up, and Aurora helped, being apparently quite calm. One day, she came into her sister's room, whilst the latter, radiant and happy, was bathing her baby. She sat down and watched the mother dry the rosy back and little face of the child. Xenia herself, a few stray golden curls falling over her white, delicate neck, completed the pretty picture; the vapour from the steaming bath surrounded her like a halo.

"My husband says that Kolia resembles you much more than he does me; he has your dark eyes; he is so beautiful and so loving. It is now your turn. . . ."

Aurora looked at her sister.

"You don't understand? Well, your firstborn should now resemble me!"

"Xenia, why are you so cruel?"

"What? How?"

Aurora rose and left the room without uttering another word. In the evening, the sisters met in the dark corridor.

"Listen," said Aurora, "you are strange people. You are hiding something from me, and yet I know everything."

"What do you know?" queried Xenia visibly embarrassed.

"God be with you!" said Aurora walking away in the direction of the drawing-room.

"The deacon must have told her," said Tropinin

when his wife related this incident to him; "I shall scold him, the chatterbox."

"No, Ilyoushka, this morning Aurora received a letter, and she sat brooding over it for a long time.

XXXIII

On the eve of the Princess's departure, Tropinin went to say good-bye to the marshal of the nobility, and to thank him for his attentions to the old lady. He also asked him to keep an eye on the property they were about to leave. Aurora also expressed a wish to say good-bye to the clergyman's wife at Tshapligino. She rode there on horseback; in the evening some one came to announce that she had sent Barss back and word that she would return later. Night came but still Aurora did not return home.

"What a dark night it is," said Xenia looking out of the window. "The sky is clouded, Aurora must be staying the night there."

"She will be wise to do so," said the Princess. "We ought to have sent Maremiasha or Yefimovna to her."

"Arina Yefimovna is with Mademoiselle," said Vlass who had remained somewhat in the background during the Princess's stay at Yartzovo, but was now again beginning to assume his old airs of importance in view of the departure.

"But why did Arina go to Tshapligino?" asked the Princess.

"Mademoiselle asked for her warm mantle, and as there are evening prayers there in honour of the

festival of the Holy Virgin, the moujiks offered to conduct Arina Yefimovna."

The next morning, the dormeuse, two open carriages and three kibitkas were ready near the stables; packages, boxes and baskets were being placed in them. As Aurora had not returned, Tropinin sent Vlass with one of the carriages to fetch her. After having given his last orders, he went out on the perron and saw the carriage returning empty. "And Mademoiselle?" he asked frowning. Vlass descended from the carriage and silently handed Ilya a letter, which he took out of his pocket.

"From whom is it?"

"From Mademoiselle Aurora Valerianovna."

"But where is she, and what does it all mean?"

"Mademoiselle wrote this letter last night, and left orders that it should be given to you when she was sent for this morning."

Tropinin opened the letter:

"Don't search for me," wrote Aurora, "and above all, do not try to find or stop me. I have irrevocably decided, after mature consideration, to go to my uncle Peter who is ill. At my request, he sent me a carriage and horses. When I have seen him and asked his advice, I shall go to the headquarters of the general staff of our army Don't be frightened. Kutuzoff's headquarters are not far away. I shall try to see his Excellency and implore him personally to find out for me what has happened. I have no strength left, I cannot suffer any longer. I shall, perhaps, manage to learn something about Basil's fate. I beg my beloved grandmother to

forgive me for the pain that I am giving her. I am taking Yefimovna with me, and I beg you all, and you too, my dear Xenia, not to think unkindly of me. What I am about to do is, perhaps, impossible, even insensate, but I am not going to give it up. You will soon know everything ; I shall try to write from Serpukhoff, and from other places where my destiny may lead me. Should I, however, never return, I beg you to pray for all the true patriots who love their outraged country, and are ready to die for her. There is no other way for me.

Aurora."

Tropinin read and re-read the letter. He questioned Vlass.

" When ? How ? With whom did Mademoiselle leave ? "

Vlass related that she had left in a *britshka** that had been sent for her by Peter Andreievitsh Kramalin ; that the deacon and Yefimovna had begged Mademoiselle to renounce her project, but that their supplications had been in vain. She left saying that she would soon return, and would probably be at Panshino even before her grandmother's arrival there. Tropinin rushed to Xenia.

" There you have women," he cried, " no middle course, an angel of sweetness or a demon of violent and secret passions."

Neither he nor Xenia could muster up the courage to tell the Princess what had happened. At last, with a thousand precautions, they told her. The Princess was very angry at first, and then she summoned the house steward, and gave him orders

* An open carriage.

to hurry after her grand-daughter. With difficulty, Ilya managed to calm her; he proved to her that pursuit would be quite useless. Aurora, having left in her uncle's carriage, would have changed horses at Kashira, and by this time would have reached her destination. In any case, Kramalin was quite sure to advise her to return speedily to her people. The Princess opened her reticule, took out her smelling salts, inhaled their fragrance, and asked what time it was.

"Order lunch, Ilya, then we shall start. Leave one carriage behind, my dear, and tell the house steward that should Aurora return, he is to accompany her himself to Panshino. Her mother was like that, she too could never keep still. Besides, Yefimovna is a sensible woman, she will look after her. As for that old lunatic of a Peter Andreievitsh, I shall write to him myself as soon as we reach Panshino. He is so proud, that man, he has avoided us all his life. What advice, pray, can he give her about the general staff? It is not a hunt with hounds! But his brother and he always liked to look down into other people's flower gardens, and now he has locked himself up in his hole, and does not want to come out."

Aurora and Yefimovna safely reached Diedino. The old man was delighted to see his niece; he cried like a child, showered caresses upon her and questioned her about herself, her fiancé, her sorrows, complaining all the time that the peasants would no longer listen to him, that indeed he was quite deserted. White, feeble and emaciated, he yet reminded Aurora of her father. "He has the same

observant expression, the same kind eyes, and the same caressing voice," she thought.

" Oh, if I were but a few years younger, and not nailed to my chair," the old man said " how quickly I should have mounted my racehorse, and how speedily we should have galloped to his Excellency to inquire after your intrepid falcon ! "

Three days later Aurora left her uncle, taking with her his benediction and a sum of money. She went to Serpukhoff. The nearer the two travelling ladies came to the city, the more they noticed the unrest and disorder that reigned among the people. A few villages had been completely deserted. Fear then seized Yefimovna ; she began to cry and lament. Food for the horses could only be procured with great difficulty. They reached Serpukhoff with exhausted animals. Half of the population had left the city ; the rich families had gone to Toula, Orel, or Tshernigoff. In the streets only soldiers, munition waggons, cannon, trains carrying food supplies for the army were to be seen. Aurora asked for the best hotel and sent for the deacon.

" Why do you want to see him ? " asked Yefimovna ; " what new plan have you thought out, and where can you find him, this deacon ? "

" I know that he is here," replied Aurora ; " he knows this neighbourhood well ; one of his relations keeps an inn near here."

" Then finish your business here as quickly as possible," begged the old nurse plaintively. " Great God, to what a country we have come ! Nothing but cannon and soldiers ! I shall be well scolded by your grandmother."

"She is kind and will forgive us. I shall see the deacon to-day, and to-morrow I shall speak to the chief of the district police, and to the authorities and then, I give you my word, we shall go home quickly."

They found Father Savva. He arrived in a great hurry, very pleased though greatly surprised to see Aurora. She told him of her intention to proceed to Letashovka where Kutuzoff was stationed at that moment; she commissioned him to find her some conveyance and fresh horses. The deacon returned in the evening in a very bad humour; the waggoners, who remained in town asked insolently exorbitant prices—a hundred roubles for two relays.

"Give them what they ask," said Aurora. "I shall take nurse with me, although I do not like to expose her to any danger."

The deacon grew pensive. He had made up his mind to abandon the church, and to enter the army; he was anxious to pay his debt to the enemy, the debt he had sworn to repay on behalf of his wife.

"Ah," he said, "it would not be only one brigand that I would fell to the ground!" Here was a splendid opportunity to go to Letashovka; he had a great mind to avail himself of it, and offer to accompany Aurora. But he could not decide definitely.

Yefimovna brought in the *samovar** and set the table. They heard the din of voices accompanied by a clashing of plates and glasses from the large room in the inn; a party of officers were there having their supper.

* tea-urn.

"What rude men, not to have any consideration for a lady staying in the same house!" He left the room, spoke to the waiter, and entered the large dining room. His presence caused a hush among the company.

"Who is below?" asked Aurora when he returned to her.

"Some hussars and among them, the famous partisan, Colonel Seslavin," replied the deacon; "he is brave and kind and presented me with a glass of rum."

"What are these partisans?" asked the girl as she poured out the tea.

"They are volunteers who have recently formed themselves into battalions; they lie in wait for the enemy, and then throw themselves upon them in small groups. There are several now; Seslavin, Prince Koudasheff and so on; people talk a great deal about them."

"And what do they say?"

"They say that not only officers but peasants, too, lie in wait for enemy soldiers, and that they kill them with hay-forks, pikes, or drown them in wells and ponds. Proshka Zernin, the *sotzki** Klutshkin, and the *starostikha*† Vassilissa are indeed heroes, and the latter is a daring amazon, a Martha Posadnitza or a Judith!"

"A Judith?" repeated Aurora in enthusiastic curiosity, shivering with emotion and drawing her cloak closer over her shoulders.

"What? Don't you know? This woman, the

* A hundreder, police inspector over a district of 100 houses.
† Wife of a starosta, or village bailiff.

wife of the starosta, called the peasants of Sitshovki together, armed them with scythes, hatchets, anything they could lay their hands on, and then, on horseback, led them against the enemy."

"A woman?" cried Yefimovna from the threshold. "How can you say such foolish things, father deacon?"

"Grandmother, I swear to you, that it is nothing but the holy truth."

"And where did she go?" queried Aurora.

"Against the French. Unexpectedly she fell upon one of their detachments, killed the officer with her scythe, whilst the peasants knocked down about a dozen soldiers, the rest fled, and they say that Vassilissa went as far as their camp through the wood."

"Merciful Father!" exclaimed Yefimovna, making the sign of the cross. "Were they not afraid? What were they going to do in the enemy's camp? There must surely be guards, sentries and one cannot enter."

"You can enter anywhere, grandmother, when there is the desire and the will to do it."

"But why march thus against the enemy?"

"They say that she had a vision and in it she saw herself go near a great general, or some one higher still, and kill him from behind a tree. Why should one not attack them, these brigands who have committed so many infamous crimes? In the neighbourhood of Smolensk, they took away the two daughters of the landowner Volkoff; two beautiful girls. I have a great mind myself to join the volunteers."

The stories told by the deacon greatly impressed Aurora. She was silently reflecting upon what she had heard when the deacon rose to take his leave.

"See that I am able to leave here to-morrow morning; pay whatever you are asked," said Aurora.

When the deacon had gone, Aurora wrote several letters, then drawing a bundle of banknotes—the present from her uncle—from her bodice, she took a banknote from among them and offered it to Yefimovna.

"Take this," she said, "pack up and prepare everything whilst I go to see about some business."

"But why do you give me this money?" wondered Arina.

"You said that we had no change; buy the necessary provisions and change the note. Pay the driver and for the oats too. As soon as I return, we shall leave here."

Yefimovna went, and Aurora fell on her knees before the holy images and prayed fervently; then she called the waiter and sent him to Colonel Seslavin with a message, asking him to come and see Mademoiselle Kramalin on a matter of great importance. A quarter of an hour later, the famous partisan entered her room.

When Yefimovna returned, quite out of breath and laden with the provisions, she met the deacon, looking very unhappy.

"I have brought an open *kibitka* *," he said, "with good horses, but the young lady is no longer here. Oh God, no trace of her."

*A low open carriage.

" Where can she have gone ? " cried the terrified Yefimovna.

" She left these letters behind her ; she herself went with the Hussars."

Almost distracted, Arina rushed into Aurora's room ; it was empty.

XXXIV

At the beginning of October, a few days before the battle of Taroutino, Kutuzoff gathered the principal detachments of the Russian army in the neighbourhood of Letashovka. A fine rain was drizzling down; towards evening the wind rose, and then the rain ceased for a while. The Prince was lodged at the extreme end of the muddy village of Letashovka, not far from Taroutino, in the little house belonging to the clergyman. Yermoloff, the chief of his general staff, and his aides-de-camp, lived at the other side of the village in some workmen's cottages belonging to an abandoned farm. It was about eleven o'clock in the evening when Yermoloff, having rendered his daily report to the Prince, started on his return journey to his lodgings; an orderly, carrying a lantern, walked ahead of him; both had to wade through the mud which sometimes reached their knees; the lantern cast but a feeble light over the broken hedges, courtyards, coach-houses and blackened roofs dripping with rain; the darkness was quite dense beyond its rays.

Alexis Petrovitsh Yermoloff was in a bad humour; his rain-soaked cloak hung heavily from his shoulders, his cap was rammed down upon his head, yet scarcely covered the crop of dark curly hair that

had grown quite long since the war. Heavily and wearily he ascended the small wet perron of his izba ; his orderly came quickly to meet him ; a stranger was waiting in a dark corner.

" Who was with you ? " asked the general in a dissatisfied tone, as he entered the well-lit room, where his servant was already arranging his supper.

" He would not give his name ; he is dressed like an ordinary citizen, but very evidently belongs to the aristocracy, and is an educated man."

" What is his business ? "

" He has an important communication to make to his Highness."

" What ? To the Prince, at this hour of the night ? " cried Yermoloff angrily shaking his wet cap upon the floor.

" He says that the matter is of the highest importance to the State, and cannot be delayed."

" They have all affairs of state which cannot brook delay," continued Yermoloff, much annoyed, and casting a side glance at the table where something tasty and fried in butter with onions, was steaming by the side of a bottle of Chablis, sent that very morning as a present to Alexis Petrovitsh by the butler of the general staff, who was a popular favourite, and very clever in finding good wines. And now here was unexpected, additional work to be done ; a groan escaped the wide and heroic breast of the general.

" Call this uninvited guest in," he said, turning to the aide-de-camp, and then sat down on a stool.

A tall, slow and somewhat awkward individual of about thirty, with a round, flat face and large, rolling

grey eyes, entered the room ; there was something feminine in his face ; his reddish hair fell down over his eyes and ears ; his heavy eyebrows, his thick compressed lips, gave him an air of dissatisfiaction and fear. At the first glance, had it not been for the side-whiskers framing his face, from ear to chin, anyone would have thought that he was a woman. The stranger wore a sheepskin fur coat, top boots and held a fur cap in his hand.

" Who are you ? " asked Yermoloff.

The man silently looked at the aide-de-camp. The general made a sign and the aide-de-camp left the room.

" Your name ? Profession ? " he repeated.

" Reserve captain of artillery, Alexander Samoilovitsh Figuner," the stranger replied in a low voice.

" What is it you want ?" asked Yermoloff, fixing his own falcon eyes upon the grey eyes of the stranger, and looking at him quietly and steadily. He remembered the name, having come across it in military reports.

" I can assure you that the matter is of the highest importance, otherwise I would not have dared to disturb you," said Figuner, speaking slowly, and endeavouring to pronounce his words very clearly. " But remember, General, everything that is possible to-day may become impossible to-morrow, if one dawdles and procastinates. Only his Excellency, and you should know anything of my plan."

" Explain your business without further preamble. We are alone here. What is it all about ? "

" I have served in the 3rd company of the 11th

brigade of artillery; recently I was *gorodnitshy* * in the province of Tamboff. Actuated by a strong feeling of patriotism at the sight of all that is happening in our country, I left the service and my family, addressed myself to Count Rostoptshin and others, and quite recently I entered Moscow."

"You have been to Moscow?" the general interrupted him.

"I went everywhere, dressed either in the uniform of an Italian or a French officer, or the garb of a Russian moujik. I have seen everything; I entered the houses occupied by the enemy, crossed the blazing streets, and I am firmly convinced that it is possible to put an end at once, not only to the occupation of our ancient capital, but even to the war itself, and the calamities that have fallen upon Russia."

"Really," said Yermoloff, "Finish the war at once."

"Yes, the war," said Figuner, "but how, is my secret."

"What is he, a Finn or a Jew?'" thought the general; "devil take him! Is he mad or simply insolent?" and he looked a little askance at the stranger. "Really it is a pity to waste too much time on these civilians." Then he continued aloud:

"Your words are more than unusually grave. Do you really believe that it is possible to end this gigantic war immediately? What united forces, the efforts of scientifie strategy have not been able to accomplish, you. . . . However, let me hear your marvellous idea."

* Mayor, bailiff.

Figuner listened in silence to the general, then took a step nearer him :

" Since I have decided to devote myself, with complete self-sacrifice to the matter, I may tell you that my plan is extremely dangerous. I have considered it well, weighed all the chances for and against ; like all human enterprises, my plan may fail, but I should like to hope that in case of such an eventuality—which would inevitably cause my death, the Emperor and the country would not abandon my family ; I am poor myself. Your word for this would be sufficient for me."

" But first of all," said Yermoloff, somewhat impatiently " what do you require so as to execute your plan ? "

" My friend Alexander Nikititsh Seslavin offered to permit me to enter his corps of volunteers : he is waiting for my answer, but I have another idea. I want to act quite independently and I wish to be allowed to pick out seven or eight Cossacks to be under my orders."

" The future of your family will be assured " said the general after a few moments reflection. " But tell me, what do you want the Cossacks for ; in a word, what is it you intend to do ? "

Figuner's eyes sparkled strangely ; he drew himself up ; he was animated and seemed taller ; his face was pale and his lips twitched.

" My plan is very simple. I am a sworn enemy of all dreamers and idealogians. They have done a great deal of harm." He became silent finding no words to express his thoughts. " I have decided," he resumed after a short silence, " and my resolution

is irrevocable, to exterminate the principal and unique author of all the evil that is now being committed. I intend to kill Napoleon."

"What did you say?" exclaimed Yermoloff, rising from his seat.

"Kill Napoleon, the leader of the French!" repeated Figuner.

"He is certainly not in his right mind," thought the general. "But after all, why should he not be in his right mind? Perhaps, he is only a determined fanatic, haunted by an obsession, a fixed idea, a passion! He would not be the only one. Did not Lounin beg to be sent to Bonaparte as an envoy with the intention of killing the Emperor when he stretched out his hand for the papers he brought!" Yermoloff rose.

"Have you finally decided upon this?" he asked.

"I have decided and I shall not withdraw from it."

"And how do you intend to carry out your plan?'

"God will decide. It will be He who will either help me to succeed or will let me fail. I intend to disguise myself as a beggar or a peasant and enter the Kremlin or wherever the blackguard may be. I alone shall strike; I require help only for the reconnoitering, for the preliminary preparations."

"You say that you have a family?"

"Yes, a wife and five young children."

"Where are they?"

"I left them at Morshansk when I went to Moscow."

"And how did you manage to get there?"

"With a passport which the French themselves gave me. I was described in it as a farmer."

"And what did you do at Moscow?"

"I followed their parties reconnoitering and foraging outside the city; I fought them when it was possible and took away their carts and supplies. I think the reports of the general staff must have mentioned me."

"Yes, your name has been mentioned in them. And so you have quite decided upon this? You are not afraid of anything?"

"One cannot fear all misfortunes. If God did not abandon man, the boar would not eat him," replied Figuner. "Brutus killed his friend Caesar, but the Corsican tyrant is not my friend. I have prayed night and day; I have sworn."

"The dammed German is coming out," thought Yermoloff, "but we shall see. What do you expect in case of success?" he resumed aloud; "say it frankly, do not be ashamed."

Figuner blushed slightly; his expression, however, was calm and cold.

"I require nothing; I am sacrificing myself for the country. Russia has brought me up and at heart I am a Russian."

"And by birth?"

"From the Baltic provinces."

"Have you your papers?"

"Here they are."

XXXV.

"It is wonderful," thought the General as he glanced over the papers. "And yet he speaks with such enthusiasm, quotes Russian proverbs and endeavours to pronounce his words clearly. What is to be done with him?" Yermoloff asked himself, lost in his thoughts "It is quite impossible to let his Excellency remain in ignorance of the offer of this man; whatever happens, I shall be held responsible. Well, let us hope that his Excellency will send him about his business."

He called his aide-de-camp, handed Figuner over to his care and walked back over the muddy path. The aide-de-camp had offered to saddle a horse for him but Yermoloff had thanked him with an impatient gesture.

At the door of Kutuzoff's hut, Yermoloff's orderly ran against a soldier busy closing the shutters.

"Everyone is asleep," said the latter seeing the general emerge from the darkness.

"And his Excellency?" asked Yermoloff.

"In bed, but the light is not yet extinguished."

"Announce me."

The orderly entered the vestibule, went to the bedroom and announced the general who had left there barely half an hour before.

Kutuzoff was seated on his bed with his bare feet

touching the carpet ; he was enveloped in a Bokhara dressing gown : before him, on a small table, was spread out a map of Russia, in which small pins with heads of red and black wax were stuck here and there to represent the Russian and French armies ; he was busy working. The room was over-heated as always with the old man.

" What is the matter, my dear fellow ? " he asked, fixing his tired eyes discontentedly on Yermoloff. " Is everything all right ? "

" Thank God, no bad tidings but there is something new," and slowly and minutely Yermoloff told him of the arrival of Figuner and of his offer. " I considered it to be my duty to submit the matter to you, and to ask for your orders. Figuner is at my place, awaiting your decision."

" So," said Kutuzoff, pulling up the dressing gown which had slipped off his shoulders ; " it is a serious matter. Have you questioned him thoroughly, listened to his whole story ? "

" Down to the smallest details, Prince."

" And what do you think of his mental condition ? Has he, by any chance, come out of the yellow house ? His brain is not cracked ? "

" That was my first idea but I have questioned him carefully ; he speaks very well and there is nothing in his expression that could suggest. . . . But whether his plan is possible of realization or no is a different question. He seems to be determined and brave beyond cavil, and his decision is quite irrevocable."

Kutuzoff leaned his old head upon his chest. He meditated. Perspiration appeared upon his full

and clean-shaven chin, either as the result of the heat, or of some emotion. He fell into a reverie; his only eye seemed to look beyond the little room in which he was sitting, beyond Yermoloff and the dark night. All his past seemed to come before this old commander, so tired and yet so vigilant, so active and so courageous.

"What a strange man. Think how he has worked it all out, the rascal! I must admit that the affair is out of the ordinary. But what have we to rely upon?" The old man settled himself comfortably upon his feather bed and put his hand to his perspiring forehead. "Of course, there have been similar examples, especially in Roman history notably during the war with Pyrrhus. How did it happen? Fabricius was informed that a certain Greek doctor (a Greek at Rome was like a German in Russia) had offered to go and poison Pyrrhus, so as to put an end to the war. If you remember your Roman hisotry, you ought to know that Fabricius listened to the Greek as you have done to this German, and that he sent the traitor to Pyrrhus. Naturally he was hanged on a birch tree or, as they called it there, a fig tree. Well, what do you say to that?"

Yermoloff preserved a gloomy silence. The candles were burning low. Kutuzoff looked out of the window through which he could see the sky, all red and glowing from the reflection of the fire at Moscow. "My feeling is that if this man should succeed in killing Bonaparte, everyone would say that it was not he, but you or I, who had killed him treacherously. Don't you think so?"

" Possibly," grunted Yermoloff, who did not yet see what the Prince was leading up to ; " possibly things happened like that in ancient Rome, but the past cannot always serve as an example for the future. And may I ask how this modern invading Attila is better than a Stenka Razin, or a Pugatsheff ? The only difference is that those brigands came from beyond the Volga, and this one comes from Paris. And you know how the Russian people treated those reprobates of yore ! "

Kutuzoff pushed back the table, let his dressing gown down, put his bare feet in his slippers, and began to walk up and down the room. He walked heavily with a swaying movement, his hands locked behind his back.

" Yes, a reprobate but of a different stamp," he said after a short silence. " If you or I were personally to fall upon Napoleon and fight him openly, it would be quite a different matter, but this plan is like throwing a stone from behind a wall."

" It shall be just as your Excellency commands," said Yermoloff drily, yet in a respectful tone, as he rose to go.

Kutuzoff detained him. " Wait a moment," he said ; " You and I, we are soldiers of the nineteenth century—that is what I want to remind you, but the real question is whether our enemies deserve the same title. I predicted that they would eat horseflesh, and they are doing it. I said that Moscow would see the finish of their idol, and of their army ; it has happened. Their strength is being exhausted ; we shall drive them out of the country, you may feel sure of it. And even if I do not live

until then, you will live, and will see these same Frenchmen hurl their present idol into nothingness with the same facility with which they have dethroned and assassinated their legitimate King. A pitiful nation!"

Kutuzoff, leaning against the window, contemplated the glowing sky. "Again a fire? The martyr city is being burnt to the ground. Ah, they will remember their fires; they will pay dearly for this, burning Moscow."

"What are your Excellency's instructions?" asked Yermoloff.

Kutuzoff turned to the general. "There is no article in any code concerning such a matter. May Christ be with him. You know the proverb: 'Look for the brave in the prison, for the coward among the clergy.' Give him eight Cossacks, and may God be with him. They say the voice of the people is the voice of God. Let him do what he has decided upon, if such be the supreme will, but as for a command to kill—I give him none."

As the partisans, Seslavin and Figuner, met at Stafievo, a property belonging to Prince Vyazemski. Figuner told the Colonel that he had been authorised to act on his own account, but that he had come to ask the advice of a colleague more experienced than himself. Seslavin gave him two cavaliers from his own detachment: one was an ensign, quite young, lean, dark, short of stature, almost a child in looks, but an admirable horseman; he had begged Seslavin to let him go with Figuner. The same night Figuner and his escort left for Moscow.

XXXVI

THE French definitely left Moscow on the 11th of October. A week later, that is on the 19th, the news was published in the " Northern Post " of St. Petersburg, but it only reached Panshino, where the entire family of the Princess was now gathered together, by the end of the month. Everyone was wondering and making conjectures as to where Aurora was and what she was doing ; nothing had been heard from her since her last letter from Serpukhoff. The Princess was in despair, and neither Xenia nor her husband could console her.

Then came the glorious reports of the battles of Taroutino, where Bagowouth fell ; of Malojaroslavetz and Krasnoe, when the French lost nearly all the prisoners they had with them. Prevented by the Russians from using the Kaluga road, Napoleon was compelled to traverse that of Smolensk which he had himself devastated. The French, regularly pursued by fresh and vigorous Russian troops, entered that vast stretch of land between the Dnieper and the Dvina. Furious at his failures, Napoleon led his troops to the Berezina, losing thousands of men and horses on the way, thanks to the terrible Russian weather : the mud was up to their knees, the frosts were awful, and the Cossacks perpetually harrassed them. The Volunteers too

greatly plagued them. The deeds of the poet-colonel Davidoff, of Orloff-Denissoff, the Princes Koudasheff and Vadbolski, of Seslavin, Figuner and of many others were known to all. There were others less known, such as the deacon, Savva Skvartzoff, who was busy avenging his wife who had been ravished by the French. One day he suddenly appeared from out of a wood and, with his stick, knocked down a French artillery officer who was just about to open fire on a Russian detachment. The French battery was captured without a shot being fired. All sorts of legends were told of the deeds of the partisans. It was said that Figuner, having missed Napoleon at Moscow, had strengthened his escort by enrolling a few more volunteers, and then thrown himself upon the road of Mojaisk, where he captured a train of supplies and luggage, set free over a hundred Russian prisoners, and blew up an entire artillery corps. The names of several women were mentioned in these tales. People praised the courage and daring of Mademoiselle Douroff, known as Cavalier Alexandroff, and of two other heroines whose names have not come down to us. These intrepid partisans, at the head of small squadrons of Hussars, Cossacks, and various volunteers, appeared here and there, harrassing the remainder of the French army by night and day, capturing supplies, luggage, and the booty carried away from Moscow. They freed the Russian prisoners, whom the French were dragging with them to carry their loads and act as servants for the army.

The Russian victories at Krasnoe completely

routed the French army. During these battles, from the third to the sixth of November, the enemy lost nearly 26,000 men, most of whom were made prisoners; among them were seven generals and over 300 officers. It was here that the débâcle of the splendid French army began; it was destroyed by fatigue, hunger, cold and disease. The fields had long been covered with snow; severe frosts, accompanied by fierce northern gales, followed. Then suddenly the weather turned very mild; fogs succeeded the fierce frost and cold; the roads with their deep tracks and thick mud became impracticable. In the meantime, Kutuzoff, travelling either in a closed sledge, or in a *droshki*,* accompanied his troops who were as if electrified by their recent victories. On the eve of the sixth of November, when inspecting the bivouacs, he arrived on horseback at the camp of the Semenovski regiment of Guards escorted by several generals and aides-de-camp. They were all very jolly, talking with animation about the definite and decisive defeat of Ney's army corps; they had even found the baton of the terrible Marshal Davout in a captured luggage train. Dusk fell in the midst of a thick fog. The Prince reached the tent of Commandant Lavroff. Not far away a young artillery officer was hastily sketching a comrade who had been severely wounded. The Prince and his escort dismounted. A seat was brought out for Kutuzoff; he sat down and stretched out his benumbed limbs and enjoyed the confusion of the young artist.

* Cab.

"What is your name?"

"Kvashnin, your Excellency," replied the officer blushing; "I am making a sketch for the father of my comrade."

"That is splendid of you. But I have seen you somewhere before."

"After my imprisonment at Moscow. Your Excellency was surprised that I could have borne it. I was aide-de-camp to Mikhail Andreievitsh."

"And who is he, whose portrait you are drawing?

"A colleague, Tyountin; we were both at Krasnoe. . . ."

But Kutuzoff was no longer listening. The cuirassiers of his escort, in order to keep out the gusts of wind, had unfurled before him the banners taken from the French. Kutuzoff contemplated the banners. The fog lifted, and the last rays of the setting sun shed a vivid light upon the lines of tents, the cannon and the soldiers grouped around the fires. The commandant's orderly served tea. Someone began to read aloud the inscriptions on the banners.

"What is written there?" queried Kutuzoff. "Austerlitz? Ah, it was hot at Austerlitz, but to-day we are revenged. I have been criticized because of the diamond crosses I demanded and obtained for the officers after Borodino, but what kind of cross do we deserve after Krasnoe? If I were to cover, not only the officers but every single soldier with diamonds, it would not be too much!"

The Prince was smiling. Everyone looked at him with a glow of satisfaction and pride. The veteran

was in a good humour and seemed to grow younger with each day that passed.

"I have never forgotten," he continued, "the highest recompense that I ever received: the grand cordon of St. George which the Empress presented to me after Matshin. That decoration used to be greatly coveted. I was young and full of hope then. Does anyone here remember the young Kutuzoff? No? . . . never mind, I received the much coveted star. Our mother, the Empress of blessed memory, summoned me to Tsarskoe Selo. I hurried there and arrived in the middle of a gala reception; the gilded rooms were crowded with high dignitaries of State, courtiers with embroidered garments; everyone stared at him whom they called 'the young hero of Ismail.' I might even say 'the handsome hero,' for in those days I was not the old owl I am now. But I looked at no one; I went straight through with the sole thought that I was wearing the illustrious star of St. George. I arrived at the Imperial study, boldly opened the door and—what happened to me? I forgot everything, gentlemen! St. George, Ismail, even Kutuzoff himself. I only saw the heavenly blue eyes, the magnificent bearing of Catherine,—and that was my recompense."

Kutuzoff pulled out his handkerchief, wiped his eyes and grew pensive. All the others observed a respectful silence.

"And where is he sleeping to-night, this son of a dog?" suddenly asked the Prince laughing loudly; "where is our Bonaparte who came here to fetch wool and is leaving shorn. No chance to-night

for a rest. Seslavin has promised to give him no respite to-night, and Alexander Nikititsh is a man of his word. Ah, they are brave fellows, these partisans. We owe them a good deal; the much praised hero runs away from them like a school boy from the rod."

Loud laughter followed this sally of the Prince. The talk turned to the deeds of the volunteers. Some praised Seslavin and Vadbolski, while others spoke of Tshernosuboff and Figuner. Someone observed that Mademoiselle Douroff, the cavalier Alexandroff, was greatly distinguishing herself with the corps of Seslavin. Kvashnin added blushing, that he had heard from a reliable source that among Figuner's escort there was also a young woman, a heroine, disguised as a Cossack. Everyone at once began to question him about this mysterious lady. Timidly looking at the Prince, Kvashnin related in French all that he had heard concerning the young lady whom he knew belonged to Moscow society, but whom he had never met.

"Who is she?" enquired Kutuzoff, slowly sipping his hot tea. "Is she another amazon?"

"Precisely, your Excellency," replied Kvashnin, growing scarlet. "She is a Mademoiselle Kramalin of Moscow. She came to find Alexander Nikititsh Seslavin at Letashovka, and he took her with him from Serpukhoff."

"But why did she come?"

"She was searching for someone I had just escaped from Moscow and I don't. . . ."

"Did she find whom she was seeking,?" asked the Prince.

" No, her search proved hopeless. She therefore begged Figuner to accept her in his escort, and since then she has never left him ; she is wonderfully courageous, doing her service like any ordinary soldier, supporting, without complaint, privations and fatigue ; she sets an example. . . . because . . . ." Here Kvashnin grew quite embarrassed and could not finish his sentence.

" Yesterday, gentlemen," interrupted general Lavroff ; " this Figuner was on the point of falling upon Napoleon. He went straight to the French camp behind a hillock ; unfortunately, however, his guides lost their way, and he missed a great capture, a first rate beast of prey."

" Yes, first rate," amiably repeated Kutuzoff, stretching his tired limbs. " By the way, to-day I received, among the many epistles in prose and verse, a new fable from our esteemed author, Ivan Andreievitsh Kryloff : ' The Wolf among the Dogs ' ; that is a present worth having ! " The Prince took a sheet of blue, rather crumpled paper out of his pocket ; he smoothed it out with the back of his hand, and began to read it aloud. In his youth he had been a fine elocutionist, a good actor even, so that even now he read well, in a somewhat singing voice.

" A wolf thinking that he was entering a sheep-cot, fell into a dog-kennel." He continued to read, growing enthusiastic, lowering and raising his voice as he read how the dogs discovered the grey one and barked so loudly that the kennel became an inferno, whilst the wolf crouching in the corner assured them that he was only an old friend, and had only to

fraternise with them and make peace ; he did not want to fight. And when he reached the lines :

" The hunter interrupted him saying :
" You are grey, my friend, but I am white,"

Kutuzoff raised his cap, showing his head with its few white hairs, and then continued to recite the last few lines with great feeling :

" That is why it is my habit
Never to make peace with wolves,
Before I have taken their skin,
And he let the dogs loose upon the wolf ! "

Everyone frantically shouted " hurrah," and the camp took it up and shouted " Hurrah " also.

" Hurrah for the saviour of our country ! " shouted Kvashnin, drying his tears, and rapturously looking at the Prince.

" That honour is not mine, it belongs to the Russian soldier," cried Kutuzoff and mounting upon his seat, he waved his cap ; " it is he who has tracked the famished animal and wounded him to the death ! "

XXXVII

The cold bitter weather returned, fierce gales again blew, and snow covered the country. The famished wild animal was losing his fur, torn from him bit by bit; he, bleeding to death, ran quicker and quicker across the endless snowfields and mysterious forests. When he reached the Berezina, he halted in view of his pursuers, who were ready to fall upon him and rend him to pieces. In a desperate movement, he threw himself into the snow in the endeavour to make them lose him, leaving behind but one or two tracks of his enfeebled paws to lead the hunters astray. Then, gathering his last strength, he swam over the Berezina. What did he care that his own people were falling under the fires of the pursuers or drowning in the river? He was saving himself. That was enough. The French, losing their last supplies and luggage trains, crossed the Berezina at Stoudianki on November fourteenth on a hastily constructed bridge that was crumbling away.

Puzzled and perplexed by this unexpected crossing and flight, the Russian leaders, each accusing the other of having lost their quarry, threw themselves with renewed vigour upon the heels of the hostile legions, even following them beyond the Russian frontier. The partisans and Cossacks pursued the

fugitives over the Lithuanian marshes and forests, harassing them, as Napoleon himself expressed it, like Arabian hordes. Seslavin was on his left, and Figuner on his right. Both were anxious to make good for the mistake committed at the Berezina, and make Napoleon himself a prisoner. Seslavin nearly succeeded at the village of Lyad. He stealthily approached it during the night, succeeded in penetrating into the village, and killing the outpost sentries guarding the road to the Emperor. But Napoleon was warned by a fire that broke out and left the village with his escort. Figuner, with a view to cutting off the French party, hurried his detachment through the neighbouring woods to the little town of Oshmiani. Seslavin was also hurrying there from the other side. Each of them had his plan all cut and dried, and was anxious to carry it out.

Worn out, and furious at his continued misfortune, Napoleon gathered Murat and the other marshals together at Smorgoni, and unexpectedly declared that the burning of Moscow, the cold and the mistakes of his subordinates, had made it imperative for him to hand over the command of the army to Murat, whilst he himself hurried to Paris to recruit a new army of 300,000 men for a new invasion of Russia in the spring. The entire cavalry division, commanded by Loyson, had already been secretly summoned from Vilna to guard the Emperor on his journey thither. The division hurried to meet the fugitive emperor, and on its march, occupied various villages, farms and inns. The reason of this march gradually became known

to the soldiers of the first regiment of the division, that chiefly consisted of Italians and Saxons. The Southern soldiers, who were unwilling followers of the Grand Army, and who were, moreover, all suffering from frozen faces, hands and feet, grumbled almost audibly in the smoky and damp Lithuanian hovels at the miserable oat soup, and cursed the chief culprit responsible for their miseries.

"He is again ignominiously running away and abandoning us to ruin; he also ran away in Egypt," murmured the soldiers, and the officers too; "If the Cossacks would only catch him and shut him up in some iron cage like a rare animal."

It was the 23rd of November. After a terrible snowstorm and gale that had lasted two days the weather again became mild and clear. The sun shone brightly; the temperature rose to over 20°. Over the white brilliant snow-covered road, skirted by hollows, a small Jewish-Polish sledge coach, such as well-to-do farmers and middle-class landowners used for travelling in those days, was gliding rapidly. It was followed by a mat-covered *kibitka**, with a body in the shape of a sunshade. Both vehicles were guarded by horsemen; they were a few hundred Polish Uhlans, who relieved one another in their guard duty. The snow creased under the sledges, and the red waving plumes on the headgear of the escort looked like so many poppies against the white snow.

In the sledge-coach sat Napoleon; he was clad in a bearskin coat and cap; Coulaincourt, wrapped up in a foxskin coat, sat beside him, whilst General

*A low carriage.

Rapp, wearing a *bourka* (felt cloak) faced them. The mameluke Rustan, clad in a peasant's sheepskin sat on the box with the Pole Vonsovitsh, who served as their guide. In the *kibitka* were Duroc, the court marshal, and Mouton, the general aid-de-camp. Napoleon was travelling under the name of the Duke of Vicence, that is Coulaincourt.

" Where are these cursed villages and towns ? " angrily asked Napoleon, who now and then thrust out his frozen nose from underneath his bearskins, and impatiently peered through the frost covered windows ; " Nothing but a desert, snow upon snow. Shall we soon reach a halting place and get a relay of horses ? "

Rapp took out his large silver watch and, scarcely able to hold it in his benumbed hand, examined it.

" The relay of horses, your Highness," he said, " will soon reach us, but the next halting place is beyond Oshmiani, about four hours from here."

" Have we any provisions ? "

" Your Highness finished everything this morning for breakfast," replied Coulaincourt : " a stuffed turkey and a Strasburg pie."

" And the ham ? "

" There were only some remnants of it which were given to the guide."

" Cheese ? "

" There is still an old piece."

" No, thanks, it is bitter and hard like a piece of wood. Is there no white bread even ? "

" Not a morsel. Rustan served the last piece at dessert."

Five versts further on, the travellers saw a group

of soldiers warming themselves before a fire in front of a demolished inn ; it was the relay. Napoleon looked out angrily, but did not leave his vehicle. The sledge-coach and the *kibitka* went on again. Napoleon slept, but shaken and jolted, he soon woke again, and began to talk to his companions.

" Yes, gentlemen," he said as if following out his train of thought ; " in addition to our misfortunes, there was also undoubted treachery. Schwarzenberg, despite our arrangements, kept aloof from the Grand Army ; we were abandoned to our fate. And how could we fight under such terrible conditions ? "

The vehicle quickly ascended and descended a heavy snowdrift.

" And the cold ! And these Cossacks and partisans ! " continued Napoleon ; " They are finishing off our exhausted legions. Who would ever have thought that their savage cavalry, that was only able to make a noise and was powerless against a handful of clever sharpshooters, could become such a danger in this absurd, incomprehensible country ? Our cavalry is being destroyed for want of supplies, our infantry is left without boots and coats, and all are hungry."

From the face of the new Cæsar his companions saw that hunger was indeed a terrible thing. They travelled another ten versts. Night was falling, Napoleon, tortured by his benumbed and frozen toes, again fell asleep.

" No, I cannot stand it any longer," he exclaimed at last, seizing the handle of the window ; " we must

stop at the first house we come to. We shall find a piece of meat or a plate of something hot."

"Your Majesty need not worry," said Rapp; "according to our itinerary, our next halting place is only two hours from here. It is a castle belonging to a man who is devoted to us. Vonsovitsh assured me that we shall find everything ready for us there."

"Go to the devil with your itineraries and your castles. I tell you that I am hungry, and that it is no joke. I cannot wait another two hours."

"But we must reach Oshmiani before night."

Napoleon was impatient; he pulled down the window and looked out. In the distance, about three versts to the right of the road, he could see a dwelling of some sort.

"A farm!" cried the Emperor, "there is a house and a church. We shall stop there."

"But your Highness," observed Coulaincourt, "it is not on our itinerary, and we are not expected there."

"And it is possible that a trap is laid there for us," added Rapp.

"What the deuce are your talking about? This is a hamlet in the midst of an open field," said Napoleon. "There are neither forests nor hills near, and besides we have our escort. Duke, order them to drive there."

Coulaincourt gave orders to halt, and sent some of the escort to reconnoitre. They returned with the information that all was quiet at the farm. The vehicles glided over the hard snow, and turned in the direction of the small farmhouse with its tiled roof. A granary stood by its side, also a stable and

an *izba*.* At the back of the house, in a snow-covered garden, a church could be seen and a little further on a small hamlet was visible. The vehicle stopped before the perron but no one seemed to be there. However, a horse, attached near the barn, proved that the house was not wholly deserted.

* Peasant's hut.

XXXVIII

A BALD and portly Catholic priest came to meet the travellers in the anteroom. Behind him was a boy pressing himself against the wall. The priest seemed to be embarrassed by the dress and aspect of the new arrival. He seemed pale and preoccupied. Napoleon entered the living room, threw off his fur coat and cap, Rustan and Vonsovitsh taking them from him, and remained in his green velvet wadded jacket, worn over his blue chasseur uniform. He sat down and looked severely at Vonsovitsh.

"Serve the Emperor with something to eat," whispered Vonsovitsh in the priest's ear. The latter, quite startled that the Emperor of the French was there before him, stared at Napoleon in silent amazement, while Rustan drew off his master's boots.

"Anything will do," continued Vonsovitsh, "soup, cabbage soup, a glass of hot milk, anything, only be quick."

"There is absolutely nothing in the house," plaintively replied the priest, crossing his hands upon his breast.

"Some white bread, cream and. . . ."

"Nothing, nothing," the priest repeated in

despair, his lips pale and trembling ; " where am I to get it ; soldiers passed here to-day and pillaged everything."

" What is he saying ? " asked Napoleon.

Vonsovitsh translated the priest's words.

" They broke open the storehouse," continued the priest, " killed all my fowls, and drove away my last cow. I have remained, as you see, only in my cassock, and I have not tasted any food since the morning."

" Cannot you send down to the village," queried Vonsovitsh.

" Oh, sir Captain, all our peasants, all my household have run away, and were it not for my nephew, who has just come from town to fetch me, I should have died of hunger here. Oh, I am sure his Cæsarian Majesty will pay for everything in time."

Vonsovitsh translated the priest's reply. Napoleon frowned at first, but then, realising that there was nothing to be done, and that these things were but the result of war, he thought it best to appear magnanimous, so patting the priest condescendingly on the back, he told him, through his interpreter, that he was glad to meet him, and that he was the first clergyman he had ever met who submitted to circumstances and was disinterested.

" But," he said, suddenly turning to the priest, and speaking in Latin, " we have a common language. Let us talk like two good Catholics."

The priest was delighted and bowed low.

" I never leave my Sallust behind me," said Napoleon, " I always carry it in my pocket. I often read Jugurtha and Cæsar and his Gallic wars.

We too, holy father, we are fighting against the modern barbarians; the Gauls of the east; we must resign ourselves to privations."

Napoleon paced the room while he talked. The priest, agreeably surprised, and the Imperial suite listened in admiration to the Latin quotations of the new Cæsar. It was very warm in the room, and the sun threw its bright rays over the modest furniture and the flower pots, which had been neglected by the pillaging soldiers. Napoleon suddenly stopped speaking, as through the window he caught sight of something which gave him great pleasure. From the garret window of the stables, a grey-spotted chicken, that had somehow escaped the general massacre of the previous day, was looking down upon the visitor.

"Reverendissime, ecce pulla," said Napoleon, turning to the priest.

The priest and the Emperor's suite hurried to the window, then out to the yard; lancers surrounded the stables and ascended the granary. The fowl flew above their heads into the garden, where the mameluke and the officers pursued it. The portly and dignified Duroc himself opened the skirts of his fur coat to try and catch the bird. Napoleon watched the scene from the window, smiling pleasantly the while. The fugitive bird was at last caught, and brought in in triumph.

"Si item," said the Emperor, "if you are as good a cook as you are a priest, prepare me agood soup."

"Magna cum voluptate, Cæsar," replied the priest, "but will I succeed?"

The nephew lit a fire and Rustan plucked and cleaned the fowl.

"But sire," said Rapp glancing at his big watch, "we are losing time. They will be getting anxious at the castle where we are expected, and also at Oshmiani."

"Another moment," said Napoleon, "I can scent a pleasant, appetising odour from the kitchen; it is still day, and we have time."

A table was placed in front of the sofa upon which the Emperor was reclining; the soup was served in an earthen pot, and a soldier had found a wooden spoon.

"Optime, superrime," repeated Napoleon, as he greedily swallowed the tasty broth.

The mameluke cut the chicken with his pocket knife, and served the Emperor with a wing and a portion of the breast, but Napoleon took the whole bird and devoured it, whilst Rustan handed him the remains of a bottle of Bordeaux from his travelling flask.

"My friends," said Napoleon in a tone of great delight, "this is a banquet; I have never dined so well at the Tuileries."

"It is time for us to leave here, your Highness," said Coulaincourt; "it is growing dusk, and we have been here over an hour!"

Napoleon smiled happily, stretched his legs, placed them upon a chair, waved his hand, and leaning back on the sofa, fell asleep in the warm atmosphere of the half-lit room.

The faces of his escort grew more and more worried. Coulaincourt made impatient signs to

Rapp ; Rapp signalled to Duroc, but they all stood there in servile respect, not daring to move, silently waiting for the exhausted Cæsar to waken.

In the evening of the same day there appeared in the forest skirting the town of Oshmiani, about five versts from the road to Vilna, a little party of horseback riders. In was Figuner's detachment. They camped in the wood, but before lighting a fire, they endeavoured to discover by whom, and in what numbers, Oshmiani was occupied. Disguised in a peasant's loose coat, with a flat cap pulled down over his ears, Figuner himself first entered the town on a forest-guard's sledge. There he learned to his great dismay that a detachment of French cavalry had arrived in the town from Vilna the previous evening. Wondering why the French had gone there, he hastened back to his bivouac and consulted with his officers. Then he divided his party into two groups, sent one through the forest to the village of Medyanka, and retained the other with him. He sent his aide-de-camp Kramm, and the old Cossack Moseitsh, who was acquainted with the Lithuanian dialect, into Oshmiani ; they were to discover in what force the French had come. The travellers entered the town at dusk. The streets were quite deserted ; the shops all closed. They only met one or two pedestrians, an odd traveller, and but few windows were lit. At the entrance of the town, the French had stationed a picket at a small inn. The soldiers, holding their horses ready, seemed to be waiting for something. Moseitsh, disguised as a woodcutter, watched them from a distance, then turning

to Kramm, who was stretched upon a heap of wood in the sledge, whispered :

" Your honour, do you see how many there are ! We had better turn back."

" Go on," replied the latter also in a whisper ; " they will let us pass, perhaps. I shall enter the inn, and we may learn something useful."

" But I have been ordered not to leave you."

" Well, then, come in as well, but we must not enter together ; you must come in later."

The orderly passed the patrol and entered the inn, then the workmen's izba. The corporal, so as not to attract attention, drove through the side streets to the market place, then to the bridge where he deposited his load of wood, and returned to the inn. Without undoing their harness, he put the horses before a crib, got some oats from the inn-keeper for them, and then stretched himself in the empty sledge and attentively listened to all that was said in the yard around him. It had now grown quite dark.

XXXIX

FIGUNER'S aide-de-camp, clad in the costume of a lesser Polish landowner, a fur-lined *beshmet** and black Lithuanian sheepskin cap was none other than Aurora Kramalin. She had greatly changed. With her hair cut short, and her face heavily tanned by the wind and weather and wearing either the *tshekmen*† of the Cossack, or the vest and top-boots of the artilleryman, with a pistol stuck in her belt, she could easily be taken for a pupil of the school for cadets. But it was not so much her costume as her sojourn in burnt Moscow, and the life she had led for the past month among Figuner's volunteers, that had changed her so greatly. Figuner himself, to whom Seslavin had entrusted Aurora, had carefully kept the secret of her birth and sex from his suite, and attributed her small physical strength to her extreme youth. The officers of Figuner's detachment at first called her Kramalin, and then Kramm for short. At first, they had made fun of the new recruit, and had called him "girl," but Figuner had quickly stopped that by speaking of the noble birth and breeding of the young man. Then they ceased making their little jokes about her.

Aurora never dismounted from her horse, and

* Jerkin worn by the Tartars. † Surtout worn by the Cossacks.

everyone greatly admired her zeal and pluck. But scarcely returned from an expedition, trembling with cold, famished with hunger, and a prey to nervous excitement, she yet prayed to be sent away again at once. The only thing that troubled her was the cold cruelty, almost barbarism with which her chief treated the French prisoners. At first Figuner would question them kindly, give them food to eat, but once that he had learned all he wanted from them, he ordered them to be shot without mercy. She could never forget that he had once, with his own hands, shot five prisoners who had implored him to spare their lives.

"Why such cruelty?" she had asked him one day.

"Listen, Kramm," Figuner had replied, passing his hands through his hair; "why should I let them live? What for? As the proverb says, 'they are neither a candle for God, nor a firepoker for the devil.' Besides, they are sure to freeze to death if we leave them, and we cannot drag them around with us."

While watching the poor, half-frozen Italian soldiers at Oshmiani, Aurora remembered another incident which had occurred but two days before. Figuner had gone to Smorgoni to reconnoitre, and on his return, had related how he had met a carriage full of French wounded, which had broken down on the road, and he had garrotted them all, and, in addition, had chastised the officer in command before shooting him. Aurora remembered all these incidents when she entered the izba. The benches and the stove were occupied by sleeping travellers,

and working men. She was so tired that she thought of nothing but how to snatch an hour's sleep.

"Do you want to rest and warm yourself, my young master," asked a bearded, White-Russian of about fifty years of age, lying on the top of the stove.

"Yes," replied Kramm.

"Have you come from the village?"

"Yes."

"Have you come to fetch fish or flour?"

"Fish."

"Come and lie down here," said the peasant, making room for Aurora beside him, "you will be a little crushed, but we'll make room for you." He extended a rough hand to Aurora who, placing one foot on the bench, jumped up on the stove and lay down beside the peasant, whose clothes smelt of hay and tow.

"We are millers," the peasant informed her, yawning, "but we also deal in flax."

Placing her head upon her sheepskin cap, she listened carefully to know if all were asleep; a profound silence reigned in the izba. For a long time she waited to hear Moseitsh give the signal for them to leave the town; they had agreed to do so before daybreak; then she fell asleep.

Suddenly she heard someone calling her; she raised her head and listened.

"It is me," said the voice of the peasant.

It was quite light in the izba, and Aurora saw that she was now alone in the room with the White-Russian, who was gazing kindly at her.

" Listen to what I am going to tell you, my young master," said the latter raising himself on his elbow.

Aurora sat up also.

" Answer my question ; is it a sin to kill ? "

" Kill whom ? "

" A man, for even if he be an enemy, he has a soul."

" In war-time and on the battle field, it is not a sin to kill the enemy," replied Aurora. She remembered the service at the church of Tshapligino, and the appeal of the Holy Synod. " One must defend one's country, one's religion and honour."

" Yes, but it sometimes happens that one kills off the battle field," sighed the moujik.

" What do you mean ? " asked Aurora.

And then the moujik told her how he had shot a Frenchman in the back? he had met him limping on his way into the town. Aurora was silent. She thought of burnt Moscow, of the place of execution. " What is he worrying about ? " she thought. " What does it matter now that all is finished and destroyed ; let them perish too." It grew quite light in the room. She could see people passing in front of the windows ; she could hear the din of voices from outside.

" And I, my young master," the peasant began again, " I have come to Oshmiani. . . ." And as Aurora still did not reply, he continued : " They say that General Platoff is coming here with his Cossacks, and I. . . ."

The door opened and Moseitsh entered. On seeing the moujik, he stopped.

" Don't be afraid," said Aurora, descending from

the stove, " he is one of our people. Well, what news ? "

" Let us go, they are expecting their Bonaparte."

" Where ? "

" Here ! "

" How do you know ? "

" They are constantly repeating the word Emperor, and pointing to the road."

" Get out the sledge ; we have plenty of time to rejoin our people."

The Cossack went to fetch the horse and Aurora followed him. The day had scarcely begun, but the street was already full of people. Everyone seemed worried, for Napoleon was three hours late.

XL

THE mayor and the other officials appointed by the French, were waiting at the entrance of the town, their eyes rivetted upon the road. The Jews, the people and the children, pressed behind, or mounted on the roofs and fences so as better to see the escort drawn up in battle array.

" There is no doubt," thought Aurora " that they are expecting Napoleon and our people are pursuing him," And she thought of Napoleon as she had seen him in the painting, aiming at the deer.

" It is not the Emperor," said a voice near by, " it is Coulaincourt going to Paris."

Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd which pressed forward. A small sledge was approaching, followed by a *kibitka* A thousand thoughts swiftly crowded Aurora's brain. She remembered the starosta Klimm, and the Frenchmen he had thrown into the well and covered with earth. She thought of the confession which the White-Russian had made to her. It appeared to her that she too had a work to do and that she should do it at once. " Blackguard, blackguard," she repeated mentally, " you have trampled underfoot all that was most sacred to us ; you will have to pay for it." Feeling the solemnity of the moment, she could not help noticing that the crowd

that had been used to welcome Napoleon with shouts of enthusiasm, now received him in silence, with an air of worry and embarrassment.

The sledge halted before the inn, and Aurora asked herself tremblingly whether it were the Duke of Vicence or the Emperor himself. At that moment, the pale countenance of the Emperor was silhouetted on the window of the sledge. Aurora recognized him immediately. "Oh, there he is," she murmured, "the plebeian Cæsar, the crowned private!"

The crowd behind her had fallen on its knees.

"Well, why are we not moving on?" asked Napoleon in a loud and discontented voice, not paying the slightest attention to the mayor, who was making a speech of welcome.

Aurora remembered her childhood, her uncle Peter, and the dog pursued by the peasants shouting: "Mad! Mad!' Here is the chance that I have been waiting for," she thought, taking a sudden resolution. "Why not shoot down the monster? Basil, God keep you!" She made the sign of the cross, placed her hand under her *beshmet* *, produced her revolver and fired. She missed the Emperor. The escort immediately turned round and fired at the crowd. A few fell, and among them a pale young man in a beshmet; he fell face down and remained motionless. The inn was surrounded, and several people, among them the innkeeper, were arrested. The miller also was killed; half turned towards Aurora, his eyes seemed to be still saying: "My young master, listen to what. . . ."

* Jerkin.

Moseitsh had been waiting for his comrade in the fields, and not seeing him arrive, concluded that he had been made a prisoner. He reached the forest where Seslavin had just joined Figuner. They had surrounded the French escort and made them prisoners. When Figuner heard of Kramm's death, he swore and bit his hands, and ordered that all the French prisoners should be shot at once. Seslavin dissuaded him, then Figuner, swearing against kind-hearted dreamers, rushed his men away, to endeavour to cut off the Emperor's road to Vilna. Seslavin remained behind.

" Have you heard ? " asked a captain of hussars turning to Seslavin's aide-de-camp.

" Heard what ? "

" That the young ensign Kramm was a woman ? "

" Is it possible ? "

" It is as I am telling you. They told it first to Sintianin who repeated it to Alexander Nikititsh."

Seslavin's aide-de-camp was none other than Kvashnin, who had joined the volunteers after Krasnoe. The words struck him.

" Kram, Kramalin ; it is as clear as daylight ; how stupid of me not to have guessed it before." He remembered the promise he had given Perovski the day he had entered Moscow, to find his fiancée's house, and that he still had the note the porter had handed to him. Deeply moved, he rushed to the izba, where the bodies had been deposited.

" Yes, gentlemen," said Seslavin standing by the body of Aurora, " this was a woman, and what is more, a heroine. Now that she is dead, we need no longer make a secret of it. Her love story will

be known one day. We found on her a medallion, no doubt a portrait of her beloved."

The officers looked at the miniature.

"My God," cried Kvashnin, "it is Basil Perovski."

"Who? Basil Perovski?" asked Seslavin.

"Yes, we were both aides-de-camp of Miloradovitsh at the beginning of the war, and we followed him from Borodino to Moscow. Perovski told me of his loved one."

"Where is he now?"

"He must have been made a prisoner, but whether he is still alive or not, I do not know."

"Since you know him," said Seslavin, "take this miniature, and if Perovski be still alive, and you meet him one day. . . . And now, gentlemen to horse and let us be off. . . ."

Seslavin's volunteers also took the road of Vilna. Before leaving, Kvashnin cut off a lock of Aurora's hair and placed it in the medallion, and hid it in his uniform.

"What an encounter," he murmured. "Would Perovski ever have believed that his elegant Moscow society lady would finish her life in a Lithuanian inn, where no one knew her, where no one will weep over her body, or throw a handful of dust over her unknown grave!" And involuntary tears welled up in the officer's eyes.

XLI

On the 24th of November, St. Catherine's day, Napoleon passed through Vilna, and two days later, St. George's day, he crossed the frontier in the very same sledge-coach in which he had been fired at and missed at Oshmiani. With much bitterness, he thought of his proclamation issued but a few months before; when he had entered the country of which he knew so little. Remembering his haughty words, he shrugged his shoulders and frowned in gloomy silence. Moscow in flames haunted his memory. "That savage city shall remember me," he thought. He was endeavouring to persuade himself, as well as others, that it was he who had burned Moscow.

It was on this road that he nearly fell out of the sledge, and only saved himself by catching hold of Coulaincourt. It was then that he uttered the historic phrase: "Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas."

Meanwhile the remnants of his once proud army, dying of hunger and cold, were hurrying to reach the frontier. In the cities entered by the Russian regiments in pursuit of the French, the inns and hotels were crowded with people, and choice wines and viands suddenly appeared as if by magic. Moscow began to rise from her ashes, and the bell

of the church of St. Peter and Paul again rang out announcing the glad tidings of Russia's victory. The archbishop Augustin entered the Arkhangelsk Cathedral, exclaiming : " Christ has risen," and the crowd replied as one, their voices sounding like thunder ; " Krhistos voskress."

Eight thousand houses had been burned to the ground, and but one thousand had been spared by the fire. A host of workmen set to work to rebuild the city.

Princess Sheleshpanskaya spent the winter at Panshino, whilst Xenia and Ilya went to Moscow, where the house of Anna Arcadievna was being rebuilt. Rostoptshin, the patriotic journalist Sergius Glinka, and many others, returned to Moscow. Clubland and society followed. The Emperor Alexander re-entered Vilna, which he had left six months before. Ilya had made many inquiries about Aurora, but with no result, as the Russian troops had now passed into Germany. Rostoptshin, on the other hand, informed him that the Minister of Public Instruction was in communication with Talleyrand, and hoped to learn something of the fate of Basil Perovski. Rostoptshin himself began to write a memoir entitled : " The Truth of the Burning of Moscow."

At the beginning of 1814, Perovski was still a prisoner. When he entered France, the news spread that the Emperor Alexander had joined the Russian troops which were entering Paris. The prisoners were taken from Orléans to Tours along the banks of the Loire, but at Beaugency, they learned that the Russian troops were near Orléans. Perovski and

one of his fellow prisoners, a certain Captain Somoff, who had now been separated from his wife and children for two years, decided to try and escape. They managed to execute their plan, and swimming the Loire, sought refuge in the wood. Paris capitulated, and Tsar Alexander and his allies entered the capital. The Tsar was returning the visit that Napoleon had paid him at Moscow; mounted on his white horse Eclipse, which Coulaincourt, when he was French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, had presented to him, he entered the French capital on March the 19th. Unlike Bonaparte, Alexander brought peace with him, and the inhabitants flung white roses before him all along the boulevards and shouted: "Vive Alexandre! Vivent les Russes!"

"Are these the savage descendants of Djenghis Khan, of whom we have heard such terrible tales?" asked the astonished Parisians, as they watched the handsome men of the Russian regiments. "No, these are not Tartars, they are our saviours. Long live the Russians! Vive Alexander, down with the tyrant!"

The Russians led a joyous life in Paris; the officers visited the theatres, cafés, restaurants and attended many dances at which they were feted and admired. All day crowds of people waited outside the private hotel of Talleyrand where Alexandre was lodged, hoping to see him, and they always greeted his appearance with loud shouts of welcome. The French were surprised at the noble and disinterested conduct of the victors. The opera produced an allegorical play: "Le Triomphe de Trajan," and

General Sacken, the Russian governor of Paris, was the recipient of many ovations. The Senate hastened to declare Napoleon's fall, and to send his family into exile. Everything Russian became highly fashionable.

XLII

In a small restaurant in the rue St. Honoré, a few Russian officers had dined well, and were now sitting chatting and smoking. They were feeling very jolly; they had thoroughly enjoyed the exquisite wines and the daintily prepared menu. They related to each other their experiences in the late war and their battles in Germany and France. All were happy in the knowledge that peace had at last been proclaimed. They were entertaining one of their fellow officers; a lean, dark-haired man wearing the Cossack uniform and a *nagaika** ; he held a meerschaum pipe in his hand. The officers were not drunk but just a little gay, and glad to be alive. One of them, the most jovial of the company, who wore the uniform of an aide-de-camp, talked loudly, and with many gesticulations. The conversation had turned on love and women, and the young officer was endeavouring to prove that love was the only real and lasting happiness in the world.

"Do you know, Kvashnin," said the officer with the nagaika, "you are charming; I have been listening to you for some time but, pardon me if I tell you that you are much too enthusiastic; believe me, there is nothing lasting and sure in this world."

"How is that?" asked the astonished Kvashnin,

* Short whip carried by the Cossacks.

intoxicated by his own eloquence. " You are an officer out of the ordinary, a brave and intrepid man; who to-day does not know of the famous partisan Seslavin ? But yet you only look on the gloomy side of life, and as for women—pardon me—but you do not understand them at all."

Seslavin smiled and replied :

" Everything in this world is either a dream or a lie ; everything can be summed up in the one word : Nothingness ! I am not alone in thinking thus."

" H'm ! " thought Kvashnin," your friend Figuner did not succeed in killing Napoleon, and you yourself failed to capture him ; that is what has disappointed you, and turned you into a hypocondriac ! " " But," he said aloud, as he refilled Seslavin's glass : " the hero of the French Revolution, the greatest military genius of our time, though he is a miserable and conquered man to-day, is he too a dream, an illusion ? "

" Young man," said Seslavin, " you speak of the French Revolution. . . Are you sure you know what that means ?. . ." Seslavin stopped as if he had changed his mind, and silently filled his pipe, while the officers crowded round him, and cried insistently : " Continue ; Continue."

" I despise nothing in the world so much as those people who speculate in the welfare of humanity," said the partisan at last ; " and the greatest speculators of that description are the French. Listen now, Kvashnin, do not start up like that. I am not ashamed of my opinion, which was also that of the dead Figuner, of whom so many weird tales, of myself also I may add, have been told."

"Good heavens," said Kvashnin, "I have never heard anyone say anything ill of him or of you."

"Let us," continued Seslavin as he puffed at his pipe, "let us analyse the French a little. To-day, they are feeling sentimental; yesterday they were as blood-thirsty as tigers. These much-praised heroes of the revolution with a madrigal on their lips, a cane in their hands, and a lily of the valley in their buttonholes, not so very long ago invited their fellow-citizens, and after them, the whole world, that is to say you and me too, Kvashnin, to come and pasture our sheep in the new Arcadia, but how did they finish? With Murat and Robespierre, with the guillotine, the murder of their king, and the crowning of a soldier, who was clever but not great, who was not even a Frenchman but a Corsican, only a man who understood them and knew how to handle them."

"Then according to you, where can one find happiness on this earth?" asked the tall and elderly Colonel Sintianin. His comrades said that the war had revealed his true vocation to him; that of a poet; like the partisan Davidoff, he had started writing verse.

"Love is the true happiness!" cried Kvashnin for the second time; "What is more beautiful than a great, sincere and pure love?"

"Happiness does not exist," repeated Seslavin. "Ask me rather what are the greatest sufferings of life?"

"Continue. We are listening."

"I shall explain myself by giving you an example. In his youth Count Rostoptshin knew a Moscow

lady who, to-day, must either be very old or dead. He said that Dante in his Inferno had forgotten one very important class : that of the old sinners tortured by the remembrance of the opportunities of sinning without being found out that they had let slip because of their fear of the consequences, or by sheer carelessness."

A burst of laughter greeted the words of the speaker.

" Do not laugh, gentlemen ; these hidden sufferings are very comprehensible to anyone who has been heavily tried by fate. Our poor comrade Figuner was a striking example ; after having promised himself to deliver Europe of the monster, after having had the opportunity and not used it, he finished by drowning himself in the Elbe. . . ."

Seslavin become silent ; his comrades were also silent.

" May I ask, Alexander Nikititsh," said Kvashnin a little later, signing to the others, " who was the lady of whom Rostoptshin spoke ? "

" It is a long time ago," answered Seslavin. " I spent a holiday with my parents at Moscow, and Rostoptshin often came to see them. I believe that the lady in question is no longer of this world, and no one here would know her at any rate. She was the Princess Scheleshpanskaya."

"What ? it was she?" cried Kvashnin. "But she was the grandmother of an officer of your detachment, Mademoiselle Kramalin. I was in their house, in the Patriachal Ponds the day the French entered Moscow, you remember, when I was nearly made a prisoner. Doubtless you know

that Mademoiselle Kramalin fired at Napoleon at Oshmiani, and that she was killed by the French, when they fired upon the crowd."

And then Kvashnin told the others, who knew nothing of the incident, all he knew of Aurora and Perovski.

"Perovski?" in his turn said Colonel Sintianin; "but he is alive!"

"Alive? Basil Perovski?" cried Kvashnin growing pale.

"Yes, even to-day I saw Somoff; he and Perovski escaped at Orléans; they both arrived at Paris yesterday utterly exhausted, half dead with fatigue and privations."

"Are you sure that you are not mistaken?" asked Kvashnin who could not believe his ears.

"Certainly not. You know where my regiment is lodged; go there and ask for Captain Somoff, and he will take you to Perovski. It was to him and to me that Dr. Mirtoff, the evening before Borodino, declared that it was much better to die from a bullet during a battle than to fight for life in a hospital."

"And Mirtoff himself?" asked someone, "is he still alive?"

"He lives, yes, but he spent over a year and a half in the hospital, begging that they would cut off his legs. However, he got better and returned to his regiment; he rejoined them on the Rhine. And now he again has a tent, a feather bed, a tea basket and punch for everyone. But it is painful to see such a fine man, such a jovial soul on crutches."

Kvashnin, weeping with joy, flung his arms around Sintianin, and embraced all his comrades,

not forgetting Seslavin, who regarded him with an indulgent kindly smile, and then hurried away to the bivouac of the guards in the Champs-Elysées.

"My God!" he cried. "I shall at last see him again. But how shall I tell him my awful news, how shall I break it to him?. . . . For two years I have carried Aurora's lock of hair, her letter, and the miniature against my heart. Poor Basil! How long he has waited for his liberty, and the chance of returning to his country! He dreams of again seeing his fiancée. . . Must I tell him the terrible truth and, perhaps, kill him? Yes, he must know it. The memory of the woman who loved him, and whom he loved, must remain with him throughout his life like a guiding star. . . though unattainable."

Kvashnin, following Somoff's directions, turned down a street near the Champs-Elysées, and entered a court shaded by large chestnut trees, at the end of which, in a small pavilion, three sick Russian officers were being cared for; two of them had gone out, the porter told him, but the greatest invalid was within.

Kvashnin knocked gently at a door at the head of the stairs; some one answered; "Come in!" and he entered a small comfortably furnished room, softly lit by the rays of the setting sun. Lying on a bed of marvellous whiteness was a pale, emaciated young man with a black beard; he was dressed in civil clothes that had very evidently belonged to some one else before they came into his possession. He was reading a newspaper; seeing a stranger enter, he rose slowly as if startled, and in his as-

tonished gaze, Kvashnin saw something sparkle that he had seen once before.

"Is it really Kvashnin?" said the unknown hesitatingly, and as if afraid of making a mistake.

"And you? Are you really Perovski?" asked the young man hardly able to control himself.

They threw themselves into each other's arms.

"Dear friend," repeated Kvashnin swallowing the tears that seemed to astonish Perovski; "Ah! believe me that life is stronger than even our greatest sorrows. . . ." And then he told Perovsski of Aurora's tragic death.

XLIII

FORTY years had passed ; it was now 1853.

For the third time since Peter the Great, a small Russian army was on the march against Central Asia, and this time the campaign had to be decisive one way or the other.

The Governor-general of Orenburg, Count Basil Alexeyevitsh Perovski, marched at the head of the army. Despite his sixty years, he still looked a young man, but his health was no longer what it had been ; he suffered greatly with asthma. Beside him was his aide-de-camp, who was said to be his god-son ; he was a very young officer, fair and beardless. The governor-general was very fond of him, and entrusted him with a portion of his correspondence ; he was the grandson of Xenia Tropinin. He had barely left the school for cadets, when he fell in love with a young Moscow girl, and was impatiently waiting for the close of the campaign to return to the side of his beloved, and marry her.

Despite the fatigue and the privations of their long march, once the orders for the day had been given out, the governor loved to talk to his god-son of the future of the deserts which they were traversing, in the heart of which, one hundred and twenty-five years previously, the entire Russian detachment commanded by Prince Bekovitsh Tsherskaski

had been treacherously massacred by the Khan of Khiva. In the felt Calmuck tent, while the samovar sang, the old commander also loved to talk of the great days of 1812, and of the long and bitter captivity he had endured. And then one could see some few traces of the old-time Basil, the gay chatterbox, in the serious, almost severe, sometime despotic and often silent, general of to-day. He had remained a bachelor, but kept up a tender friendship with those of his past, who were still alive, and sent them many affectionate letters which he dictated to his god-son.

"What great days those were," he would say. "One could tell so many stories of it, and go on for years. And when one thinks, my dear Paul, that all that world lived, loved, sang, or suffered! All those men, unknown to us of to-day, but who then were so near to us, the unhappy and the happy, the gay and the sad had their morning, their noon, and their evening, and now—the majority of them are sleeping the long sleep! To us, old sentinels, it is sweet to look back into those shadows, to remember those who sleep behind the lowered curtain, the dear friends of the past who to-day are dead!"

Very few people knew of the great wound that still bled in his faithful heart. His comrade, the poet Joukovski, knew the truth however. He had even dedicated a touching poem to him:

"I see thy youth blossom into full flowering.
Love—that murderer of life—
Is killing you in silence.
Often on your face I can read the thoughts of your soul,

Suffering, inconsolable love,
Paint themselves there, one after the other."

On the 28th of July 1853, after almost unheard of efforts, the Akmetshett fort was taken by assault, and was renamed the" Perovski Fort." The road to Turkestan, Khiva, Bokhara, and even to Merv, was open.

One evening, Paul Tropinin seated in the tent of the commander-in-chief, placed under the walls of the above fortress, told him how, during the previous winter, when travelling across the steppe, between Orenburg and Moscow in obedience to his godfather's call, he had nearly perished, indeed he had only escaped death thanks to a deerskin cape and to a pair of *valenkis*. . . ."

" A pair of valenkis ? " said Perovski ; " ah yes, I know them well. In 1812, I too was saved by a pair of those shoes, and you can imagine my joy when I discovered the comrade who had so generously given them to me, still alive and well."

" Who is he ? " asked Paul.

" A freed serf, who belonged to a Countess. He succeeded in escaping before I did, while we were still in Russia ; he wandered as far as the Volga, where he secured employment in the fisheries. He has changed his name ; to-day, he is a fish merchant at Samara."

" At Samara ? I must see him," interrupted Paul.

" That is it ; look him up ; his name is Simeon Nikodimitsh. Last year, having heard that I had been appointed Governor of Orenburg, he came to

offer me his services in the provision department ; he has married and is a grandfather ; he has a white beard that falls to his belt. He has become an old believer, and is very devout, but sometimes I recognize in him traces of what he was, when I knew him as the lively and daring Sienka Koudinitsh ; he has even not forgotten his old songs, especially that of " the barn-owl," with which he used to amuse the prisoners. He was then betrothed ; as soon as he was free, he went at once to his beloved."

" His fiancée ? " said Paul, reddening suddenly.

" Yes, but what has that to do with you ? "

Paul gathered all his courage together and told the Count stammeringly, that he also was engaged. Then he asked for his blessing and a furlough of some days.

Perovski looked at the young man for some time with a kindly and gentle glance.

" Well, why not, Pavloushka ?* May God be with you ! Even though I am an old bachelor, I understand. You may go to-morrow. As to my blessing, you have it, dear boy." And he embraced his god-son. " You do not remember your grandmother, Xenia Valerianovna," he said.

" She died before my father was married," replied Paul.

" Your great grandmother, the Princess Scheleshpanskaya, was terrified of storms ; she did everything she could to guard herself against them, and she died in the country, sitting in her armchair, the day our troops entered Paris."

* Dim. of Pavl, Paul.

"I have often heard her spoken of," said the young man.

"Have you ever been told that she had another grand-daughter, the beautiful Aurora? Your father resembled her a little, and you do too slightly."

"I remember hearing about her. It seems that she joined the volunteers and greatly distinguished herself."

"It seems," thought Perovski with a sigh. "Such is our fate, such is our history!" "Well go," he added aloud, "go my young friend! Make your preparations for your departure; I also, shall prepare something for you."

When his godson had gone, Perovski shut himself in his tent, lighted a candle, and took out of his bag a small casket mounted in silver. He opened it and pensively looked through it. In a secret compartment, were some sprigs of dried lilac, some yellowed letters, a lock of black hair, a small image, and the handkerchief that Aurora had left behind her at their last interview. His fiancée appeared living to him; he saw again the house, the garden, the Patriachal Ponds. For a long time he stayed bent over the little casket, and dropped warm tears on the flowers, the letters, the lock of hair. "Oh, my beloved!" he said as he kissed these poor relics of the past. Then he took the holy image, locked the casket, and again calm, left the tent. Paul, stretched out upon a mat, was dozing at the entrance.

"What, you are still here?" said Perovski. "Come, and walk with me a little."

They passed the guard, and leaving the camp, walked along beside the grey earth walls of the fortress, that had just been demolished, and directed their steps towards the flat banks of the Sir-Daria.

The evening was oppressively hot. In the twilight one could just see the heaps of yellow sand around the green pools of sea water in which the stars were reflected; the mist above the marshes, the rushes, the absinthe, filled the air with their perfume, and one heard a continual rustling movement; it was caused by the hosts of locusts rubbing their dry wings as they greedily swarmed upon the meagre vegetation. Perovski thought of the invasion of 1812.

"This is the benediction that I have kept for you," he said, as he hung the image of the Holy Virgin round the neck of his godson: "In all the critical hours of my life, I have prayed before this image; do thou the same!"

They walked on a little. A world of sweet and bitter memories swelled the heart of Basil Alexeyevitsh.

"You are happy! You are going to your fiancée," he said stopping and listening to the rustling of the wings of the aerial and devastating army. "Your happiness has revived in me the memory of a great sorrow that came to me in my youth. Many of those concerned in it are dead to-day. But I—I do not forget."

And then Perovski, without mentioning names, told his godson the story of his love for Aurora.

PG 3321 D25M613
Danilevskii, Grigorii Petrovich
Moscow in flames

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

ERINDALE COLLEGE LIBRARY